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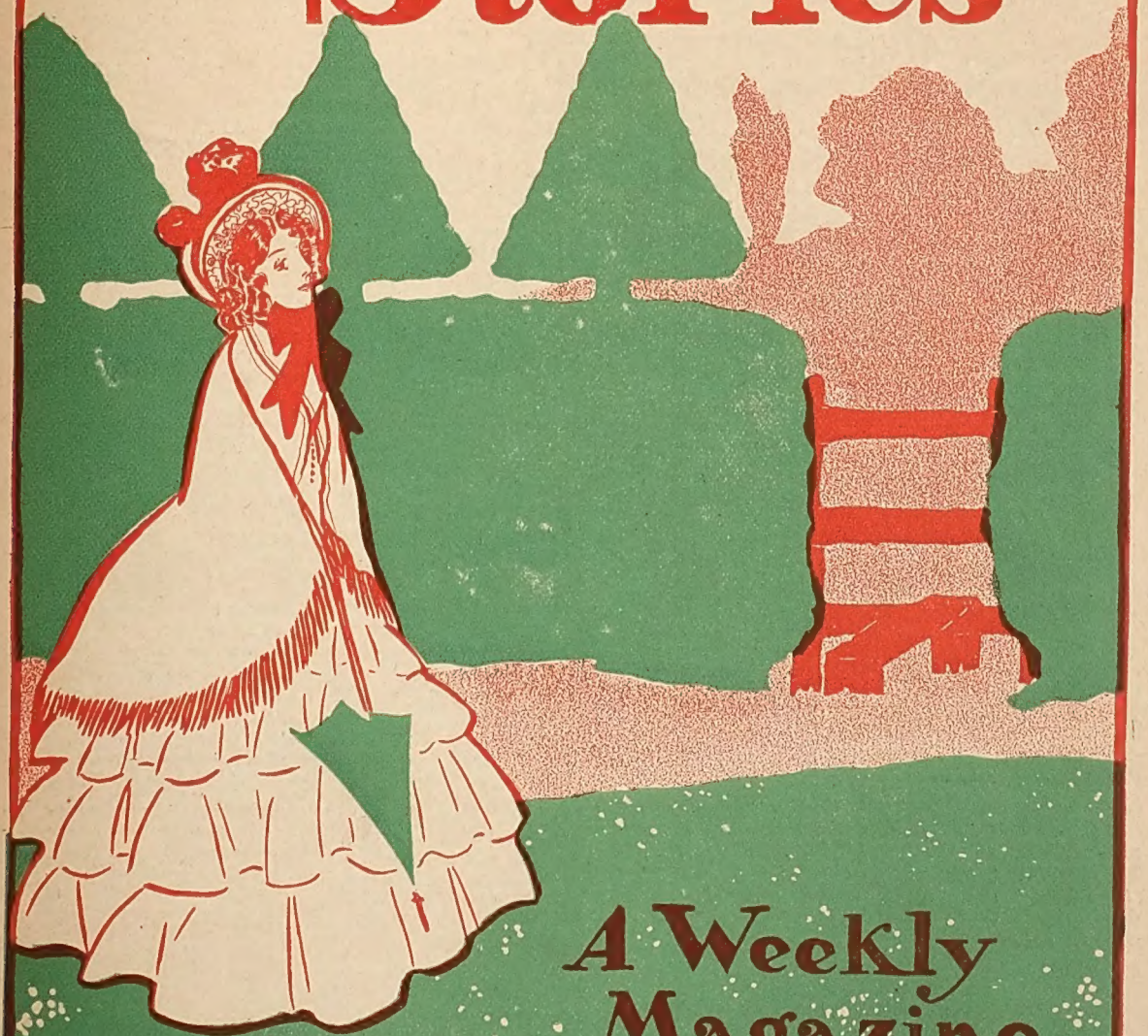

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SHORT STORIES

No. 669.] For the Week Ending October 26th, 1901. [One Penny.

The Adventures of an Actress.

"You cowardly blackguard!" he said, "so that's your idea of fair play!"

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A THRILLING INSTALMENT.

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ACTRESS.

XII.—THE LAST CARD. The Story of a Wager.

By DONOVAN MART.

CHAPTER I.

MONTAGU GOLDSTEIN, money-lender, sat in his private office in East Street, Leeds, for all the world like a wizened old spider in the centre of his web, waiting for a fat and juicy fly.

Montagu Goldstein had a smile upon his face which cannot be said to have enhanced the attractiveness of his features, unattractive enough when in repose, though in some ways his face was unlike that of the typical son of Israel so often depicted in the pages of fiction and on the stage. His nose was only slightly hooked, and his thick lips and receding chin were hidden by long grey hair. He had scarcely any eyebrows, and though Nature had been beneficent to him as regards the hirsute adornment of the lower part of his face, she had been woefully sparing towards his crown, which was, to all intents and purposes, bald.

He was little more than five feet in stature, and had long skinny hands which seemed specially adapted for a man of his trade and calling.

On this gloomy autumn morning in November he sat poring over a dirty little account book which, notwithstanding its outward appearance, contained a vast amount of documentary evidence to show how far-reaching was the influence wielded by Montagu Goldstein.

Suddenly their came a knock at the door, and a lanky out-at-elbow youth, who might very well have stood as a model for Smike in "Nicholas Nickleby," entered. This creature sidled up to the table of the money-lender and said in a quavering, husky voice:

"Mr. Mark Spalding to see you."

The Jew's eyes narrowed; they always did when their owner was pleased about anything.

"Show him in," he said curtly.

The servant retired as he had entered, in a sidling, crab-like way. Scarcely had he departed than the door opened again, and a young man, well dressed, with a pale, rather weak face, a faint moustache adorning his upper lip, and with watery-blue eyes, entered.

"Good morning, Mr. Spalding," said the money-lender benignantly. "It was a pleasure to see you always. And of course you have come to settle that little account, eh? Sit down and I will give you a receipt in a few moments, and if at any other time Montagu Goldstein can accommodate you, well, you know Montagu!"

The young man gave vent to a nervous laugh, and flung himself down on the ricketty chair offered to him with a would-be air of indifference.

"I am afraid I can't pay you this morning, Mr. Goldstein," he said. "I've come to ask you to give me a bit longer."

The Jew squared his elbows on the table, and leant forward with an ominous look upon his face.

"I am afraid I can't do that, Mr. Spalding," he said. "You see, the bill has been due already some time. I am a poor man, and business is business. You came to me and said you were in a bother, and I lent you the money without a word. Now, when I ask you to pay as a gentleman, you tell me you can't. No, no, sir; I must have my forty pounds or I must take proceedings."

The young man took a cigarette from a silver *etui* and lit it with a very badly assumed air of nonchalance.

"By Jove, Goldstein," he said, "you do know how to lay it on. So the ten pounds I borrowed have become forty now. Well, look here. I can't possibly pay you now. I'll own I wanted that ten pounds so badly that I was ready to overlook your exorbitant interest, but my allowance doesn't come in till next week, and I'll pay you fifty then, if only you'll give me a little longer?"

But the money-lender shook his head.

"Business is business!" he repeated obstinately. "If gentlemen want to borrow money, well, it's only fair that we poor people who accommodate you should make a little profit" (if 100 per cent. is a little profit, there was justification in Goldstein's words); "either you pay me now, or I go to your father and tell him how his son plays cards with all the other young gentlemen in Leeds."

"Not that! not that!" cried Spalding in terror. "Why my father would disown me. He abhors card-playing more than anything else in the world, and you would be farther off than ever from getting your money."

"I'm not so sure about that," answered the Jew shrewdly; "I'm not at all sure that Mr. Anthony Spalding, one of the most respected mill-owners in Leeds, wouldn't be ready to pay a good deal rather than have all the city know how his son spends his time."

"Then it's very plain you don't know my father," came the quick answer. "He'd kick me out of the house, and tell you to go to blazes. You can take my word for that."

The Jew made no answer for a few moments. His

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crafty little eyes, keen as a hawk's, scrutinised the young man's face with preternatural sharpness. He was far too cunning to show what was passing in his brain, yet at the same time he realised that Mark Spalding's fear of his father was tempered by the reflection that the mill-owner would sooner disown his son than pay debts for such an abhorred pastime as card-playing.

"Well, what do you propose to do, then?" he said slowly. "How is poor Goldstein going to get his money?"

"Give me another week," came the almost despairing request, "and I'll find you fifty pounds somehow."

"And if you don't, what then?"

"Oh, but I will—I will! Something's sure to turn up by then."

Again came silence.

"Well, look here," said Goldstein suddenly, his wheedling, almost cringing voice suddenly changing its accent and becoming harsh and authoritative. "I'm not going to be played fast and loose with much longer. I'll give you till the end of next week on one consideration. Either you find me the fifty pounds as you promised, or the debt becomes doubled, and I get one hundred pounds from you any way you like. No, on second thoughts, if you again fail me I shall go at once to your father and you will be ruined in every way. I've had enough of your shilly-shallying. Will you promise to pay me fifty pounds next week?"

"I suppose I must," came the hopeless answer; "though it's the most sickening case of bloodsucking I've ever heard of."

"Bloodsucking, eh?" snarled the other; "didn't you come to me and say, 'Goldstein, I must have ten pounds; if I don't have ten pounds at once I am a ruined man,' and didn't I accommodate you at once, and am I to get you out of a difficulty for nothing? No, no, sir; when it's a question of business, business has to come first. I've got to earn my living, just as you have to yours, and if I weren't to charge a little interest how on earth could I hope to make both ends meet in these hard times?"

Spalding rose to his feet with an impatient gesture.

"Well, that's settled, then?" he said, with the air of a reprieved criminal. "I'm to give you fifty pounds next week, and all is to be over between us?"

"Not so fast, my young friend," answered the Jew, with an exasperating familiarity. "I must have your signature to that little bit of business, if you please. Merely a matter of form, I know, in dealing with a gentleman like you; but at the same time, as I always say, business is business."

With a feeling akin to despair Mark Spalding put his signature to the new bond, and left the Jew's office as he had come, shamefacedly and with stealth, and as he walked through the murky streets of Leeds he kept saying to himself, "How on earth am I going to find that fifty pounds? I swear I'll never touch a card again. And yet——" Here his thoughts broke off weakly, for he knew that he would again tempt fortune at the gaming tables, and, like a silly moth round a candle flame, he would go on singeing his fatuous wings until at last his whole being would be absorbed in the fire.

A large poster on a hoarding suddenly attracted his attention.

THEATRE ROYAL, LEEDS.
For Six Nights only.
THE GOOD SAMARITAN,
By a powerful London Company, including
MISS HAZEL HARLOW.

Then followed a cast of the performers, and underneath the lithographed portrait of a girl in colours, and really a very fine sample of the colour-printer's art. It was a beautiful face, with regular features and big blue eyes, surmounted by an aureole of red-gold hair. Underneath was written, "Miss Hazel Harlow in her famous impersonation of 'Ruth.'"

The young man gazed at the picture with eyes full of admiration. Suddenly a hand was laid on his shoulder. He wheeled round, to be confronted by a youth of about his own age and appearance.

"Hullo! Manners," he said. "It's you, is it?"

"Yes. So you're smitten with the fair Hazel, eh? Stunning fine girl, isn't she?"

"Rather!" answered Mark. "Only I suppose that picture is idealised a good bit, isn't it?"

"Don't you believe it, my boy!" cried Manners. "It doesn't half do her justice. She is said to be the most beautiful woman on the English stage."

"So I've heard. And they do say she is the most straight-laced, too. Her name's been in the papers a good deal lately."

"Oh, that's all my eye," answered Manners. "All actresses are the same, and I'll bet Hazel Harlow is no more straight-laced than you or I. She gives out that she is—it's a good advertisement. It draws all the High Church folk and the parsons who preach about morality on the boards. I'll bet you that I'll take Hazel Harlow to supper at the Metropole before the week is out."

Spalding uttered a half-laugh. Then suddenly the expression of his face changed.

"I'll bet you you don't," he said.

"Well, I'll lay you fifty pounds I'll do it."

"Are you in earnest? Do you mean to really say you will lay me fifty pounds that you'll get Hazel Harlow to come to supper with you at the Metropole of her own free will? I'll bet you sixty you don't."

"Done with you there," answered Manners, who, it may be noted, was the pampered son of one of the most wealthy manufacturers in a wealthy city.

The bet thus lightly made was speedily ratified, and the two friends parted, and as Spalding walked on down the street he said to himself, "Sixty pounds! If I can win I shall be able to pay off old Goldstein and have ten pounds for myself. Win! Of course I'll win. It's too good a chance to throw away, and if I can't do it by fair means, well, I must try foul!"

CHAPTER II.

It was six o'clock. Already a crowd was besieging the doors of the Theatre Royal all eagerness to see Hazel Harlow, the heroine of so eventful a tour as the present one had been. Ever since the theatre fire at Newcastle in which Hazel had played so conspicuous a part (*see Short Stories*, No. 662), Leeds, in common with the other great cities of the North, had been all agog to see the beautiful young actress who had had such a miraculous escape.

Hazel and Jenny Lovelace were in the former's dressing-room, getting ready for the evening performance, when a note and a small box were brought up to their room for Miss Harlow.

Hazel opened the note first.

"Dear Miss Harlow," she read, "although I have not had the pleasure of meeting you in private life, what I have read and heard about you has made me very anxious to be able to congratulate in person an actress who has

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already made herself such a name upon the stage. It would give me the greatest pleasure imaginable if I might be allowed to show some little mark of my admiration for your achievements. If you would allow me to give myself the pleasure of inviting you to supper after to-night's performance, at the Hotel Métropole, I should be more than honoured.

"Believe me, I make this request from no unworthy motives. If you would so far favour me I should take it as a sign that you are ready to accede to my request by your wearing the trinket that I am sending under separate cover. Should you display this upon your person to-night, I shall take it that you accept my invitation in the same spirit in which it is made, and will wait for you at the stage-door at the close of the evening's performance.

"With sincere wishes for your continued prosperity, believe me to be, yours very truly,

"Archibald Manners."

With a merry laugh Hazel tossed the note to her companion.

"What do you think of that, Jenny?" she cried "Am I not indeed honoured?"

Jenny read the note carefully through and her lip curled.

"What does the young idiot take you for?" she said scornfully. "But I must open the box to see what the trinket is," and she was just about to tear the paper off the little package when Hazel intervened.

"I am going to send it back unopened, Jenny," she said firmly. "Don't you see the very fact of my inspecting it would be a confession of weakness."

Jenny put the box down without a word.

"You are quite right, darling," she said. "I didn't look at it in that way."

Hence it came about that Mr. Archibald Manners received a rude shock to his pride and the prospects of winning the bet he had made with Spalding, on his present being handed back to him by an attendant in exactly the same condition in which he had dispatched it. He had rather foolishly bidden Spalding accompany him to the theatre to see how Hazel was to succumb to his blandishments. Needless to say, Spalding's jubilation was ill-concealed.

"That's what I call a smack in the eye," he whispered jocularly. "You see I was quite right; you're not going

"It's only fair that we poor people who accommodate you should make a little profit."

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Editor's Page.

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to catch Miss Harlow so easy as you think, in spite of your undoubted lady-killing propensities. You may just as well pay that sixty pounds and have done with it."

The other made a somewhat poor attempt at a smile.

"Don't cry till you're out of the wood," he said, with choler visible in his voice. "I'm not beat yet. Mark my words; you haven't got that sixty pounds yet by a long chalk," and he thrust the little box (which contained by the way, a very charming diamond brooch) vindictively into his pocket.

The rise of the curtain on the first act of *The Good Samaritan* cut short a further conversation between the pair.

At Hazel's first entry on the stage, a storm of applause rent the theatre, in which Manners and Spalding joined heartily.

"By Jove!" muttered Manners, forgetful for the moment of the cause for rivalry between himself and his companion. "Her portraits don't do her justice; she's the most beautiful woman I've ever seen."

"Perhaps that is why she won't sup with Archibald Manners, Esquire?" muttered Spalding vindictively.

His remark was ill-advised, and had the direct effect of making Master Archibald all the more eager, apart from the monetary considerations of the question, to win the wager.

But Mark felt confident; that queenly, imperious figure, who moved about the stage with such grace and dignity, who spoke with such sweet purity of accent, would surely never condescend to join in the frivolities dear to the heart of the ordinary actress?

It is to be feared that Manners paid but little attention to the play. When Hazel was on the stage his eyes were fixed on her; when she was not his thoughts were entirely concerned with thinking out a plan whereby he could carry out the design which had been so recently foiled.

Now it so happened that the theatrical company numbered amongst its party a girl who appeared on the playbill "Miss Dorothy Lestrange," though her real name was as prosaically Mary Parker. This girl had only a minor part, and was, in theatrical parlance, "in the crowd," that is to say, she appeared in a scene where a number of well-dressed men and women moved about as a set-off to the more prominent characters. She was a warm-hearted, impulsive, frivolous young person, who was never averse to "a lark" or to receiving surreptitious presents from strange "johnnies." She had been "on the road" for quite a number of years, though she had never yet reached the dignity of a good speaking part. Like hundreds of other girls possessed of no extraordinary fitness or attainments, she had been attracted by the glamour of the footlights, only to discover, when too late, that the plums in the profession were few, and that "Hazel Harlows" were born not made.

As Archibald Manners' eyes were roving listlessly over the stage during a scene in which Hazel had but little part, they were attracted by Miss Lestrange, who was walking with an elegantly dressed young man at a fictitious garden-party. He hurriedly consulted his programme, "Lady Lanchester," he read, "Miss Dorothy Lestrange."

"By Jove!" he said to himself, "that must be the same girl that I was introduced to last year when *The Lights of London* Company was in Leeds. I remember her face quite well. Now, I wonder if it would be any good my trying to get her to help me to win this bet. I should like to score off Mark, to say nothing of the fact of getting such a lovely girl as Miss Harlow to have supper with one. It strikes me I was rather a fool to make that bet, but whoever heard of an actress that didn't like to be trotted round and have attentions paid to her? After all, there's no harm in it; I'll try and get the fair Dorothy to help me."

At the close of the performance Manners, in accordance with the plan that he had already worked out, said "Good-night" to Spalding, and announced his intention of going straight home. He hurriedly left his companion and ostensibly departed homewards, only to retrace his steps as soon as he had assured himself that the coast was clear, and hurry back towards the theatre.

The performers were already issuing in twos and threes from the stage door as he got back. His quick eye at once singled out Miss Lestrange, talking and laughing with some of her fellow-actors and actresses Concealing himself in a doorway he watched his opportunity, and at last saw her hurry away alone evidently *en route* for her lodgings. He hastened quickly after her, and taking off his hat politely, said:

"Good evening, Miss Lestrange; I think I once had the pleasure of meeting you about a year ago, when you were in *The Lights of London* Company. My name is Manners. Perhaps you remember me?"

The girl looked at him critically. She had met so many young men of this type during her stage career that, had she been absolutely truthful, she would have at once admitted that she had quite forgotten his face and existence. But this was not Dorothy's way.

"Why, yes," she said, smiling. "Of course I remember you."

"Good," answered the young man; "I am delighted to again have the opportunity of renewing your acquaintance. But it's rather late now, and I expect you are wanting to get home. It would give me great pleasure if you would honour me by accepting an invitation to lunch at Baton's, in Briggate. I could meet you anywhere you like at midday to-morrow."

There seemed no harm in this. The prospect of a good lunch in a restaurant with an evidently wealthy young man, was in itself sufficiently alluring to account for the readiness with which the girl accepted the invitation, and when Manners really departed for his home it was with a more comforting assurance that he was on the high road towards success in his attempt to entrap Hazel Harlow. He did not notice that the figure of a man had dogged his footsteps persistently ever since he had said "good-night" to Spalding. It was, in fact, friend Mark himself, who felt that he had too much at stake to give his so-called friend any latitude in his designs. The fear of what Montagu Goldstein would do unless the money owed him was forthcoming at the appointed time, acted as a powerful spur to Spalding to relax none of his vigilance.

"I wonder what game's up now?" he muttered. "I must try and keep an eye on coming events."

Thus ended the first act in the somewhat paltry drama.

CHAPTER III.

Dorothy Lestrange owned to a weakness for champagne; the lunch that Manners had ordered to cement the acquaintanceship between him and his fair companion was of the best. It was not till after the meal, when the young man had produced his cigarette case and obtained permission to smoke, that he ventured to

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broach the real subject that had induced him to renew Dorothy's acquaintance.

"What a beautiful girl Miss Harlow is," he began carelessly. "She has regularly taken the town by storm. I suppose you know her quite well?"

"Oh, yes," answered the actress, but without warmth; "she is beautiful, there is no doubt about that, but I can't say I know her very well. She's rather too stand-offish for me. She's very well in with Venables, the manager, but she doesn't chum up with anyone in the company except Jenny Lovelace. A lot of funny things have happened in connection with her, that some of us think must have been put-up jobs. Why, when she was at Portsmouth she and Lovelace, instead of pigging it in ordinary lodgings as actresses generally have to do, got themselves invited to stay with Sir George and Lady Terrington, about the biggest pots in Portsmouth. How they did it I don't know. Then she got kidnapped on board a boat at Bristol, and was at sea a whole night. That was a splendid advertisement, and of course it drew like smoke."

Manners expressed his interest.

"But I thought she was an awfully quiet sort of girl?" he said; "objected to supper-parties, receiving presents, or anything like that."

The other laughed.

"I believe she's a regular deep one," she answered. "To talk to her you'd think butter wouldn't melt in her mouth, and of course all the men are wild on her. A man that was in our company called Monteith got his head cut open at Birmingham, and he hasn't been able to rejoin us yet. This was because of her, though it's a long story, and too much trouble to tell you."

Manners was silent for a few moments; then at last he said: "Don't you think if I were to give a little supper-party Miss Harlow couldn't be induced to come too?"

"You might just as well invite the King of England to join you," came the quick answer; "and I see you're gone on Miss Harlow like all the rest."

"No, I'm not," responded Manners, colouring slightly. Then his voice changed and he leant forward. "Look here," he said in a low tone, "I'll tell you why it is I asked you if there wouldn't be a chance of getting Miss Harlow to come to supper. I've got a bet on with a chap that I'll do it, and I'd give a good deal to be able to bring it off. Will you help me?"

Seeing that he was in earnest the girl dropped her bantering tone.

"I don't mind," she said; "it wouldn't do Miss Harlow any harm, and it would be rather a lark to play a game on her. But she'll be a hard nut to crack, and for the life of me I don't see how you're going to do it."

"Well, I've got an idea," answered the other; "and I think if you will back me up, there is no reason why we shouldn't do it in such a way that Miss Harlow would never know what the real facts of the matter were. In the first place does Miss Harlow know anything about you?"

"Know anything about me!" This was uttered in some surprise. "What do you mean?"

"I mean does she know anything of your antecedents, anything of your private affairs? Have you ever told her who you are and where you come from?"

"Not likely," came the somewhat scornful answer. "My father was cashier in a London Bank. But what has that got to do with it?"

"Everything! I want your father to be a Leeds gentleman; a nice respectable old man who is very proud of his daughter, and fond of everything connected with the stage."

The girl's mystification deepened.

"I don't see what you're driving at," she said perplexedly. "What has all this got to do with Miss Harlow going to your supper-party?"

"You have just admitted," answered Manners, "that Miss Harlow has very rigid ideas on such subjects, but don't you see that if you were to have an elderly and eminently respectable father, who was dying with anxiety to make the acquaintance of the famous Miss Harlow, and had asked you to bring her to supper with him and yourself after the theatre, there could surely be very little harm in such a request. In that way I might win my bet, and you any little present that you had set your heart upon."

"But," said the girl with a laugh, "where's your old father? You are not going to tell me that you're going to pose as my venerable and respected old parent, for no matter how well you were to disguise yourself your voice and actions would surely betray you."

"I didn't say I was going to disguise myself as anybody," replied the young man. "But first of all, do you think you are game to help me?"

"Yes, as long as I know quite fully what I've got to do."

"Well, there's an old man I know," continued Manners, "who has been in my father's firm for nearly forty years. He's a jolly old boy and would do anything for me. I could easily get him to pose as your father 'for one night only,' as the playbills say. The conditions of my bet didn't say anything about two other parties being present. We should be a *partie carree*. All you've got to do is to go to Miss Harlow to-morrow morning and tell her that your old father is so delighted with her impersonation and herself that he is dying to make her acquaintance. You can pitch any yarn you like about him, and surely she won't see any harm in joining such a pair as you and he. I shall, of course, be waiting at the Metropole till you turn up. You can then introduce me as your cousin, or anybody else you like. We shall just have supper, papa and you will see the fair Hazel home, and I shall have won my bet."

"Well, it certainly sounds simple enough," answered the actress; "but I must be introduced to 'papa,' and we must know exactly what we are going to do."

"We'll fix all that up this evening," came the ready answer. "You can approach Miss Harlow to-night, introduce her to your 'father' at lunch-time to-morrow, and fix up the supper-party for the same evening."

And so it was settled. Any qualms that Dorothy Lestrange might have had were lulled to rest by the reflection that there was nothing criminal about the plot in hand, and if Miss Harlow were by some untoward chance to discover that there was a plot afoot, even under that eventuality there would be but little to fear.

It was arranged that the actress should make her pseudo-father's acquaintance that same evening before the performance at the theatre. She could then approach Hazel, and they could see whether their scheme was likely to prosper.

CHAPTER IV.

"Can I speak to you a minute, Miss Harlow?" It was Dorothy Lestrange who spoke, and it was in Hazel's dressing-room on the same evening of the same day that

Read "Dead to the World."

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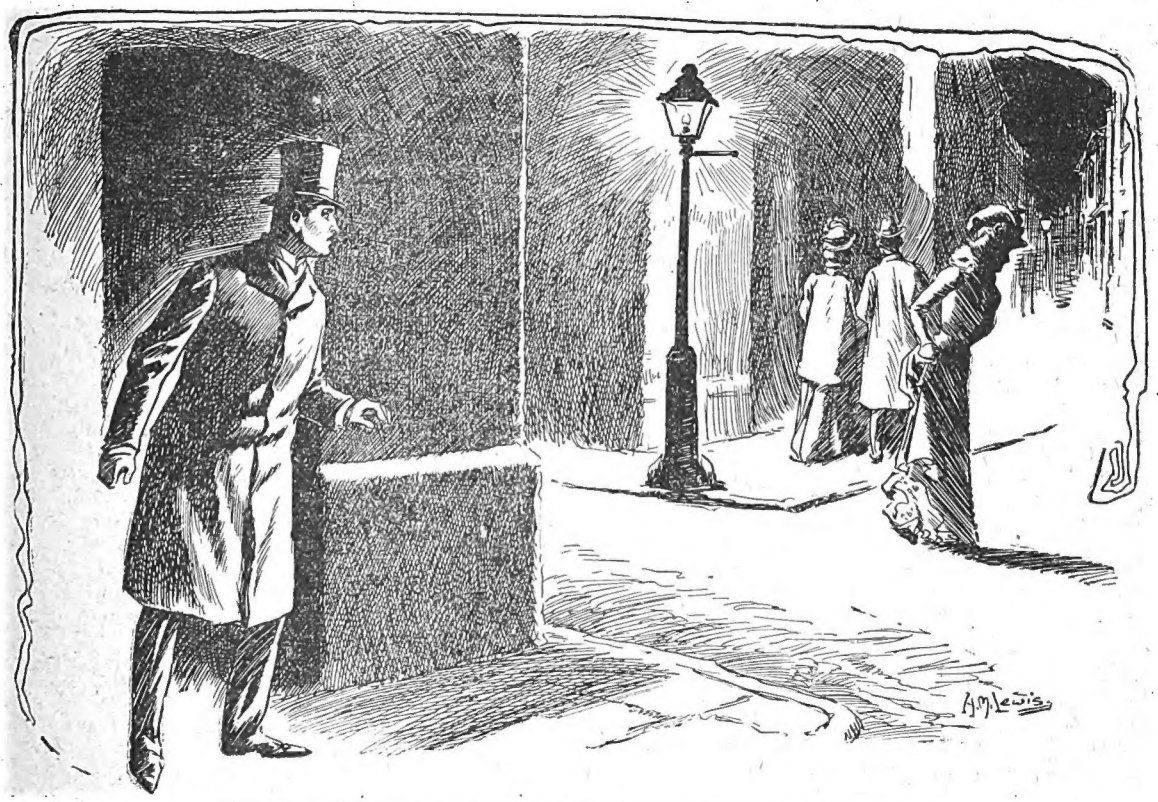
had seen the interview between Manners and Dorothy.

Hazel looked up in some surprise. She had never had very much to do with Miss Lestrange, and up till now their acquaintanceship had been restricted to the ordinary topics caused by their common calling. She wondered vaguely what the girl could have to say to her. But there was nothing in Dorothy's face or manner to excite suspicion. She looked boldly and frankly in Hazel's eyes.

particularly fond of her old parent, who had the appearance of a respectable old merchant by no means poorly off.

The old gentleman expressed the pleasure he had had in the performance, and especially in Miss Harlow's impersonation of the part of Ruth, the heroine of the play.

"My dear," he said, turning to Dorothy, "I wonder if you could induce Miss Harlow to join you and me in a little supper-party to-morrow night. Just us three. Your friends, you know, my dear, are my friends."



At last he saw her hurry away alone, evidently *en route* for her lodgings.

"Certainly, Miss Lestrange," answered Hazel pleasantly. "Can I help you in anything?"

"I don't think I ever told you," began the girl, "that my old father is at present living in Leeds. He was at the theatre last night, and will be here to-night, as I have got Mr. Venables to give me a ticket for him. He was very much struck by your performance, and he wanted to have the pleasure of making your acquaintance. I said I would do my best, and that is why I have come to you."

As was somewhat natural, Hazel felt sligthly flattered at this tribute to her histrionic powers. She saw no reason to suspect anything underlying Miss Lestrange's request, and when in the interval between the first and second act Dorothy brought behind the white-haired, benevolent-looking old gentleman with gold-rimmed spectacles across his nose, Hazel received him graciously. She noted, moreover, that Dorothy Lestrange seemed

He said this with such a delightful air of old world simplicity, that Hazel, as was indeed pardonable, was completely taken in by his plausibility. She could do no more than accept the invitation with becoming grace.

"Then that settles it," said the old man. "To-morrow night I'll send the carriage round for you both, and we'll go together to the Metropole. I shall then have much pleasure in seeing you home." This to Hazel.

As was natural, Hazel told Jenny of the honour that had been proposed to her by the suppositious father of Dorothy Lestrange. Jenny was surprised, yet after Hazel's account could see no reason to put in the way of Hazel's accepting the invitation.

"He's a pleasant old gentleman," Hazel said, "and seemed very fond of his daughter. You saw him, Jenny, didn't you?"

"Yes," answered the latter; "and I must say he seemed a very decent old boy. I should never have

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imagined that the Lestrange would have come of such respectable parentage. I suppose it's all right in letting you go; but if I thought there was any chance of that blackguard Caldecott being in the game I'd see that you accepted no invitations anywhere. But I think after that little adventure at Portsmouth he will be chary of showing his nose anywhere where we are. We know enough now to have him laid by the heels and clapped into jail. Sir George Terrington would back us up in that."

In this Jenny was right enough. There was no fear of Caldecott putting in an appearance in Leeds. On the face of it there seemed but little reason to fear that there could be any danger to Hazel in accepting the invitation to supper at the Metropole. Yet had Hazel known the real facts of the case, and the cross currents that were connected with it, she would, under no considerations, have gone further in the matter. Her eyes were to be opened somewhat roughly.

Manners, as can be well understood, was jubilant at the success that had attended his plan. He had purposely kept out of Spalding's way, and on happening to meet that young gentleman on the morning of the very day that was, as he hoped, to see the successful fulfilment of his bet, he was careful to assume an air of the utmost dejection.

"I'm afraid it's all up," he said gloomily. "You were quite right about Miss Harlow. She's one in a thousand among actresses, though I haven't quite given up all hope."

But Spalding was not to be taken in by this assumption of despondency. He had, unknown to Manners, kept a pretty careful eye upon the amplification of the scheme, though he had been unable to find out the exact nature of his adversary's plans. But he knew that somehow Miss Lestrange was implicated in the affair. He accordingly sent an anonymous note to Hazel warning her of her fellow-actress, and admitting that there was a plot afoot to entrap her into a supper-party; but, unfortunately for his scheme, Hazel saw him hand the note in at the stage-door, and thinking that it was merely a missive from some would-be admirer, she tore it up without reading it. Thus Spalding was unwittingly foiled in his attempt to avert the success of the bet.

It had been arranged by Manners that Hazel, Dorothy, and the spurious father should drive from the theatre to the Hotel Metropole, where he (Manners) would be waiting them in a room upstairs, where the supper was to take place. In view of the fact that his appearance would create some surprise, the old man was to mention incidentally on the journey that he had invited a nephew of his to meet him at the Hotel and join them at supper. It would then be too late for Hazel to offer any protest at the introduction of a fourth party to their number.

But there was one thing that Manners had left out in his calculations. He himself had never known what it was to be hard up for money. The son of doting parents, his every whim had been indulged.

But with Spalding the case was different. His mother was dead; his father was a strict puritanical merchant of the old school, who looked with abhorrence on all forms of amusement, who expected his children to agree with him on every point. Thus Mark had grown up in abject fear of his stern parent, and had only indulged in those pleasures dear to the youthful heart surreptitiously and in secret fear, and where his follies had led him we have already seen. And now a chance had come whereby he could retrieve his position and deliver himself from the hands of Montagu Goldstein. In other words, he had staked his all upon the mad wager.

As can be well imagined, Miss Lestrange had concealed from her lady friends in the company her connection in the plot that was to intrap Hazel Harlow. This was not because she was afraid of the consequences that might ensue from her action, for, truth to tell, there were a good many in the company who would have rejoiced to see anything that might lead to Hazel's discomfiture. The girl's beauty, her reserve, her modesty, were all inexplicable to the frivolous actresses, a good representative of whom was Dorothy Lestrange.

Dorothy could see no harm in the deception; it was merely a lark; and if anything did happen to spoil the plan, well, she did not feel that her reputation or her chances of success in her profession would be any the more ruined by such an escapade.

CHAPTER V.

Archibald Manners, in irreproachable evening dress, sat in the private supper-room he had engaged at the Hotel Metropole, awaiting the arrival of his fellow-conspirators and the unsuspecting Hazel.

"How well everything has gone," his thoughts ran; "it'll be a nasty knock to Mark when he has to stump up sixty pounds. Dolly Lestrange is a brick. I'll have to give her that diamond star I got for the fair Hazel. I hope old Walker won't give the show away. He really makes a very excellent father. I must only see he doesn't take too much champagne."

Suddenly the door of the room shot open, and Mark Spalding entered the room with a would-be air of gaiety. Manners looked at him in astonishment, not unmixed with a certain amount of choler.

"Hullo!" he said, "what do you want here?"

"I heard you were giving a little supper-party," answered the other, "and I thought I would just trot up and see how things were getting on."

Manners made no answer to this statement. He was evidently revolving in his mind what this move of Spalding's could mean.

"I must say, Mark," he said at last, "I think it is rather impertinent of you to force your way up to a private room like this; but as you are here you may as well hear the truth. I am every minute expecting Miss Hazel Harlow and another lady and gentleman to sup with me here. So you see that in spite of all the bet is won, and you had better submit with a good grace."

Spalding's pale face went, if possible, a shade paler.

"You've not been playing the game," he said hoarsely. "Miss Harlow is not coming here of her own free will. You are entrapping her here." He paused abruptly. He could not say that he had sent a note to Hazel warning her of the plot that was afoot, for that would show that he had been playing the spy upon his friend, and, strange as it may seem, he had a curious feeling of false honour as regards his behaviour to "his friend the enemy."

Mark Spalding was a curious combination, torn between a sense of half-hearted honour and weak-kneed cowardice. Had he made a clean breast to his father of his delinquencies, it is probably that the way out of his difficulties would have been comparatively easy.

Manners looked at him attentively. In the hour of his triumph he saw no reason to restrain his gratified self-esteem.

"Excuse me," he said bombastically, "Miss Harlow

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comes here of her own free will, so you can put that in your pipe and smoke it. I tell you the bet is as good as won."

"And I tell you it is not," answered the other in a voice of suppressed passion.

"How will you prevent it?" sneered Manners.

There was a look on his face that goaded Mark to madness. He seized hold of a winebottle that stood on the table and hurled it straight at Archibald's head. It caught the young man fairly on the temple. With a dull groan he sank in an inanimate heap to the floor.

"Good Heavens!" muttered Spalding, "I believe I've killed him."

He stooped down and put his hand over the other's heart. To his great relief it still beat. Then his senses quickened. There was a folding door in the room, connected with some apartment beyond. Mark threw it open and disclosed a dark bedchamber. He lifted the stunned man off his feet, and staggered with him to the bed, where he deposited his victim carefully upon the mattress, and wound the sheet tightly round his legs and arms.

"I don't think he'll come round yet," he muttered, "and when the other three come I'll get them off at once. Anyhow, I shall have won the bet."

This last remark showed in what channel his thoughts really ran.

He quitted the darkened room and locked the folding doors. Hardly had he done so than he heard footsteps outside. A waiter threw open the door to admit Hazel, old Walker the false father, and Dorothy Lestrange.

"Well, Charles," began the old man cheerily, but further words froze on his lips, for instead of Manners, whom it had been arranged to address as Charles Tomson, his nephew, he was confronted with the pallid face of Mark Spalding. As for Dorothy, she could do nothing but gaze open-eyed at the strange young man who so unexpectedly stood before her.

A sudden fear seized hold of Hazel's heart. She had accompanied Dorothy out of sheer good nature to a party that was against all her instincts and desires. What could this new development mean?

Spalding broke into quick speech.

"Miss Harlow," he said hoarsely, "listen to me, I beg you. You are in danger here. You have been misled. This old man is in the employ of Manners, the young man of whom I wrote to warn you. It was his hand that planned the scheme that was to lead you here. He has evil designs against you, and I have come to save you. Be advised by me, I beg of you. A scandal is sure to arise round your fair name unless you take heed to my warning. Go, while there is time. I will escort you to your lodgings."

The effect of Mark's words can be well imagined. Upon the faces of Walker and his fellow-conspirator guilt was largely writ. As for Hazel, she gazed from one to the other of them in the blankest amazement possible.

"I don't understand," she murmured. "Is this true, Miss Lestrange? Is this really a plot? What harm have I done you that you should betray me so cruelly?"

But Dorothy could find no answer. She could only gaze vindictively at Spalding.

As for Walker, he was the picture of villainy unmasked.

Hazel turned towards the door. Suddenly a stifled cry fell on her ears and caused her to pause irresolutely. It came from behind the folding doors of the room beyond.

This new and unexpected event had a marked effect upon Spalding, whose turn it was now to exhibit symptoms of guilt. A dull wave of colour flooded his pallid features.

"Fly," he said hoarsely to Hazel.

Again from behind the folding doors came a faint cry.

"Help! Help!" was heard.

Walker flung open the doors and dashed inside the chamber. The next moment he was beside the bed upon which Manners lay, having just struggled back to consciousness. To undo the captive's bonds was the work of a few moments. With a stifled oath Spalding rushed towards the door of communication with the main corridor of the hotel, but Dorothy was too quick for him. Like lightning she turned the key in the lock and planted herself against the door!

"No, you don't," she said defiantly. "You may as well face the music as the rest of us."

As she spoke Manners tottered into the apartment on the arm of Walker, his white face rendered more ghastly by a smear of blood caused by his assailant's blow.

As can be well imagined, Hazel's brain was in a whirl. She had accepted the old man's invitation, merely expecting a quiet little supper party, and instead of that she was suddenly confronted by a scene that might have been imported from a melodrama.

Manners regarded Spalding with a perhaps pardonable expression of concentrated fury.

"You cowardly blackguard!" he said, "so that's your idea of fair play. When I made that bet I didn't bargain to wager with a would-be murderer." Then he turned to Hazel. "Miss Harlow," he said, "I owe you an apology. The cat is out of the bag now, and it's no good beating about the bush any more. This man is not Miss Lestrange's father. My real name is Archibald Manners."

In a flash Hazel remembered the note she had received from a young man a night or two before.

"I bet this cur here that I would induce you to have supper with me of your own free will, and in order to prevent me winning the bet he came here and tried to kill me. There, that is the whole story, and I promise you there was nothing else at the bottom of it."

Spalding moved towards the door. "Let me go," he muttered sullenly. "You've ruined me between you; I don't see what good I can do by staying here any more."

Dorothy moved away from the door mechanically. As for Hazel she could find no words. Her one longing was to get away from the place as best she could. The affair had indeed ended in a fiasco.

Spalding rushed out of the room and down the broad stairs of the hotel, notwithstanding the outcry made by Manners when he realised that Mark had gone.

"What was the good of keeping him?" said Dorothy scornfully. "The game's up. I should think you had better cry off with that bet. The best thing we can do to have our supper as if nothing had happened."

A world of pent-up scorn was visible in Hazel's voice as she returned.

"You are perfectly free to do as you like, Miss Lestrange; as for me, I am going back to my lodgings at once. I am afraid my ideas of humour and yours do not coincide. I can see no fun in weaving a tissue of lies merely to have the laugh at one who has never done you any harm."

"That's all very well," answered the other with a sneer, "I don't set up for being a straight-laced goody-goody. I wonder what the company will think when they hear that Miss Hazel Harlow, the sanctimonious

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lead, has been supping at the Metropole at Leeds at the invitation of a strange young man—" but the rest of her words fell on the empty air, as far as Hazel was concerned, for the girl had swept with queenly grace from the room, leaving the three fellow-conspirators to derive what satisfaction they could from the outcome of their paltry scheme.

As for Manners, he was feeling too sick and ill to care about falling in with Dorothy's suggestion and partaking of supper. He wanted to get home, to hide his diminished head. He would settle with Spalding later.

Yet the settlement was to be deferred for a longer period than he dreamt of at that moment.

CHAPTER VI.

It will be remembered that Montagu Goldstein had given Mark Spalding a week in which to find the fifty pounds due to the rapacious money-lender. The time duly came round, but of Spalding there was no sign. Goldstein began to get uneasy. At last he resolved upon the extreme course of seeking out Anthony Spalding, Mark's father, and laying his claim before him.

On the evening of the day on which Mark was to have appeared with the needful money Montagu dressed himself in his best, and sallied forth with no slight feeling of misgiving for his interview with the wealthy mill-owner. He sent in his card, and was ushered into a splendidly appointed library. He had hardly had time to take in his magnificent surroundings when the door opened and a tall, grey-haired old gentleman, with keen eyes and hooked nose, entered.

Goldstein rose and made a profound salutation.

"To what am I indebted for your visit?" said the merchant curtly.

"It is about your son," answered the money-lender.

"About my son! What have you got to do with him?"

"Only that he owes me a matter of fifty pounds, and that I have come for a settlement," answered Goldstein, assuming a boldness he was far from feeling.

"Oh, he owes you fifty pounds, does he? Well, and how do you propose getting it?"

Goldstein began to bluster. "It's a fair and square piece of business," he said; "and if the money is not forthcoming, well, I shall have to see what the law can do for me."

"Then I advise you to go to law about it," was the cool answer. "I tell you I have washed my hands of Mr. Mark Spalding. I'm not a fool, Mr. Goldstein. I have taken the precaution to make myself in no way responsible for my son's debts. And as regards your getting the money, well I believe my son borrowed money off you at an extortionate rate of interest. Here's a letter for you to read that may give you some food for reflection." And he took a note from his pocket-book and handed it across to the infuriated money-lender. And this is what Goldstein read:

"My dear Father,—When this note reaches you I shall be far away. I have gone to London to enlist as a soldier. I grieve to tell you that I have got into difficulties over card-playing—a fact which I know will make you very bitter against me. I owe Montagu Goldstein, the money-lender, fifty pounds. I can't pay him, and I have other debts, so I thought the best thing I could do was to go away and see if I couldn't do better in the service of the King. Hoping you will forgive me, I am, your affectionate and sorrowful son—Mark Spalding."

The letter fluttered out of Goldstein's nerveless fingers on to the carpet. The older Spalding's eyes never left the other's face.

"But surely," muttered Goldstein feebly, "you won't let a poor man suffer this loss."

The adamant old man looked at his watch.

"I think this interview has lasted quite long enough, Mr. Goldstein," he said coldly. "I have the pleasure to wish you a very good night."

He pressed an electric-bell button in the wall. In a moment an austere man-servant answered the summons.

"Kindly show Mr. Goldstein out, Collins," said the merchant. And there was no course left to Mr. Montague Goldstein but to slink away discomfited, tail beneath his legs, liked a whipped cur.

Thus ended an episode in which Hazel Harlow had, unconsciously as far as she was concerned, played so important a part. It is needless to say that Goldstein never saw a penny of his fifty pounds, and the event, as it turned out, proved Mark Spalding's redemption. He served for five years as a common soldier, and then his father—his heart relenting with advancing years—bought him out and reinstated him in a position of trust in his own business. And Mark Spalding never regretted the years he had spent "with the colours."

Hazel had, of course, told Jenny the true story of how she had been entrapped by Manners, and of course Raymond Venables became acquainted with the story as well. This being the case, it was of small moment that among the rank and file of the company the story of the supper-party, as related by Dorothy Lestrange, did Hazel but little harm in the eyes of her intimates.

The better-minded members of the company listened to the garbled version of the story, chuckled over it, and speedily forgot it. If Venables had had his own way he would have given Dorothy Lestrange her *conge*, but it was Hazel herself who begged him not to adopt this course.

"It would be like an admission of guilt on my part," she said; "for of course they would all think that you had been influenced by me, and that I wanted to be rid of the one who knew a story so greatly to my discredit. I am quite ready to live the affair down, Mr. Venables, for, after all, I have nothing to blame myself with."

And when the knowledge of this came to Dorothy Lestrange's ears it did not, as might reasonably have been expected, make her change her views as regards her antipathy to Hazel.

"If ever I get the chance," she said, when talking to her other lady friends of the Company, "I'll get even with Miss Hazel. If she hadn't been so straight-laced I should have got a jolly good thing out of that young fool Manners. He promised me anything I liked if I helped him to score off our sanctified lead; and you know, dears, it was really she who suggested the supper-party, for all that she said."

Thus did the baffled actress seek to work out the revenge that she had promised herself against her more favoured and infinitely more honourable fellow-actress.

Next week Manchester is to be the scene of the *Good Samaritan* Company's triumphant tour. Here the company was to be treated to a strange and unpleasant surprise—a surprise due to the envy and malice of a rival touring company, who had been impressed by the triumph due to Hazel Harlow's personality.

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver?" See Editor's Page.

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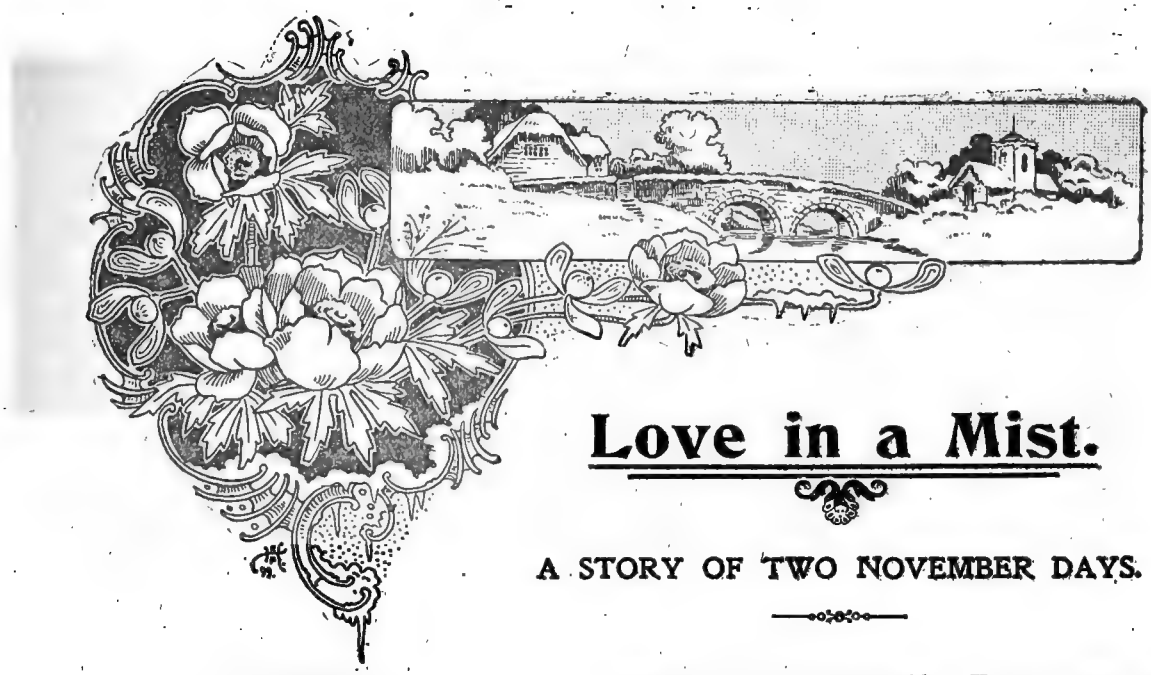

Love in a Mist.

A STORY OF TWO NOVEMBER DAYS.

CHAPTER I.

My Name is Christina Fenton.

"By Jove, Granger, it is thick and no mistake! Don't I wish I was up in our two-back-pair at Mrs. B.'s, contemplating a bright fire and a glass of something warm. Instead of which I shall be stuck here for another hour or so—these plans must be finished to-night. I wish you were sharing the job with me. If I don't turn up at supper, you'll know I've got lost in the fog on my way home."

The maker of this announcement laid down a long, finely- sharpened pencil, picked up a delicate pen, and began to work at the sheet of crisp paper pinned on to his drawing-board, whistling a gay air the while.

"Never mind, my dear Leslie," he was told soothingly; "the fire and something warm shall be arranged for, providing I don't go astray myself."

Maurice Granger glanced from the casement near which his companion sat—at a long table illuminated by a trio of green-shaded gas-brackets. Below was a usually crowded thoroughfare, hidden at present by a dense brown wall of fog. Through it neither street lamp nor the lights of the shops were able to penetrate. Even the roar of the traffic was dulled to a ghostly murmur.

"Nice boy!" said Mr. Jack—otherwise John Leslie—as he stroked in a solid section on the elevation he was completing. "What a blessing you are to me! I'm mortally afraid of your falling in love, and then farewell to our bachelor friendship, our study of the Elizabethan drama, our cycling, our pipes of peace, in short, our idyllic state of male existence."

"Rubbish!" retorted his ally, donning a smart Raglan of gray frieze, and lifting his bowler hat from its peg; "I've seen prettier faces in Canada than ever I hope to see among your stunted, anæmic townsfolk; and as they didn't soften my heart towards the sweet sex I don't expect an Englishwoman to do it."

"Boaster!" said the other; "well, be off, and don't forget the fire and the toddy. You'll be safe from Cupid's arrow in this fog, at all events, for there's no seeing a bright eye or a trim ankle in the pea-soup mixture the clerk of the weather has served up to us for air."

Maurice buttoned his gloves, took his umbrella, and crossed the lofty room. Only he and his friend had remained out of the half-dozen draughtsmen who worked for the famous engineering concern which had given to the riverside town of Groudle its chief source of prosperity.

"I say," cried Mr. Jack Leslie, twisting in his chair as Maurice Granger reached to the handle of the door; "you might lay in a few cigarettes, we're quite out, I know. None of your Turkish for me, though—mine's the right navy-cut, and medium, you absent-minded rascal; the last you stocked were mild, and I like to taste my tobacco."

"It shall be done as my lord commands," replied Maurice, stepping out on to the dusky flight that descended to the huge yard at the back of the soot-grimed house sacred to the draughtsmen and the designers of the Groudle Steel Company.

The vast stretch of irregular ground, littered with disused boilers, orderly heaps of scrap-iron, girders, engine-beds, and a thousand other forms of rusty metal was invisible. The fog covered it with a bewildering veil.

Maurice found the path to the exit, said good-evening to the porter, and swung off into the oppressive yellow haze. It was his first experience of an English fog. Born in the Dominion—as Canadians love to call it—he had lived there for twenty-three years, of infancy, youth, and early manhood. But at last, alone in the world, with a profession in his fingers, common to most civilised countries, he had been seized by a passion to behold those little islands on the coast of Europe from which so many lands have been peopled. He had ended by packing a kit-bag, drawing the few hundred dollars he

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had saved, and booking his passage on a Montreal liner. Six months later he was installed at the Groudle Steel Company's yard, the bosom friend and partner of Jack Leslie.

Many things drifted through his mind as he strode along; he was beginning to sicken of the English winter, the thought of the Canadian one came back to him with an irresistible appeal. He heard again in imagination the chime of the sleigh-bells, and the pistol-shot crack of the whip, sniffed the keen, pine scented atmosphere, heard the whine and yelp of the careering dogs. The fog stifled him and stung his face like the fumes of an acid, he muttered a malediction upon the weather of the Old Country, and there rose in his mind a project of returning to the Dominion with the ensuing summer.

He had walked on for three-quarters of a mile—mechanically following, as he imagined, his habitual route. Vehicles passed him but seldom, the pavements were deserted, the town seemed dead—smothered by the overpowering pressure of the fog.

Suddenly Maurice Granger halted; he had awakened to the fact that he was in an unfamiliar locality. A sharp rise in the ground warned him that he was ascending a hilly road, bordered, he could just discern, with closed shops. He struck a vesta and consulted his watch—it was ten o'clock.

"The deuce!" he exclaimed. "I must have been confoundedly late leaving the yard. Leslie, poor beggar, won't get home till the small hours. When I shall arrive there depends upon where I have wandered to. How on earth am I to find out?"

As he propounded this query, he glanced around him, seeking to penetrate the ocean of mist in which he had been moving. A dim patch of radiance shone dimly through the haze. It proceeded from the other side of the street; he went over to it, trusting it might prove an establishment where he might inquire the best way to his lodgings.

His wish was gratified; the illumination arose from a cigar-divan, the neatest and most diminutive he had ever beheld. Scarcely wider than the hall-way of an ordinary dwelling-house, the shop was sandwiched between tall and shuttered neighbours; matting ornamented its strip of floor, a settee fronted the counter, the window held a picturesque display of tobaccos, and, to crown all, a pretty attendant was visible beyond the amber plush curtains, reading a bulky novel.

Maurice Granger recollected Jack Leslie's commission and entered the place. Its custodian started and sprang up.

"I—I'm afraid I alarmed you," said the young Canadian smiling; "sort of absorbed in your book, eh?"

The girl flushed.

"Y—yes," she stammered; "there's been no one in for such a while that I fancy I had slipped into another world. What—what can I get for you?"

Her customer glanced at her critically; she had spoken in a soft and cultivated tone that deepened the impression her appearance had made upon him. She was dark-eyed and dark-haired, with a clear complexion, and her figure, though disguised by her loose blouse of black silk, was sweet and dainty.

"Well," answered Maurice thoughtfully, "I want a large box of navy-cut cigarettes, medium strength, and half a pound of your best Turkish—Diplome Regie, if you have them. Also I should be glad if you could tell me where I am?"

The attendant turned from the shelf whence she was lifting the enamelled box of navy-cut, to stare at him. She checked herself and laughed.

"Oh, the fog!" she said, commencing to weigh the second item of his order. "Why, you're at Pike Hill, in the north-end of Groudle."

The Canadian whistled.

"Am I?" he exclaimed; "that is curious. I struck out for Clubmoor. I am only about two miles out of my course. I see your fogs are as bad as the Dominion blizzards."

"The Dominion!" repeated the girl; "you are a Canadian?"

Maurice nodded; he had caught a cigarette from the scale-pan, and was lighting it. "Certainly," he said. "Have you friends out there?"

"Lots!" was the answer; "why, I am a Canadian myself. But I came to England when I was quite a child. I have always promised myself to go back, though."

Her customer leaned on the counter interested. "I have only been a year in the Old Country," he responded, "but I am pining to sight Montreal again. Oh, for a swift team and a box-sleigh on the Lafayette Road, or an ice-yacht on the St. Lawrence. This isn't weather, it's pea-soup."

The youthful tobacconist sighed.

"I remember the sleighing," she said. We lived near Lafayette, by the saw-mills."

"Did you?" cried Maurice Granger, "my dad had a stake in those confounded mills. They were burned in the big strike."

"I was a tiny mite then," said the girl, putting the Diplome Regies into a tissue-paper bag; "but I have heard that time talked of. My uncle was a foreman there and helped to lead in the strike."

"And my father helped to suppress it," answered Maurice; "how strange it seems, and how queer that you and I should be standing in far-off England talking about it! Thank you! I'll put some of those in my case, if you don't mind."

He produced a silver receptacle and began to fill each compartment, peeping covertly at the girl behind the counter. He noticed that she had firm, white hands, and that there were no rings on them.

"Don't you think we ought to introduce ourselves?" he ventured; "we may have met before in Lafayette, as kiddies, but that don't count. I'm Maurice Granger: won't you let me know who you are?"

The girl flushed, and lowered her eyes—two womanly hazel pupils.

"My name is Christina Fenton," she said.

Maurice raised his hat.

"Your servant, Miss Fenton," he replied. What more he would have added must remain doubtful, for a shuffling footstep sounded in the shop, and he moved from the counter that the young tobacconist might deal with her fresh patron.

The newcomer was a bent, grey-bearded fellow of some fifty winters. He wore a shabby great-coat, a broad brimmed felt, and supported himself on a stout stick as he walked. By his wide, blue, expressionless orbs Maurice perceived that he was blind. His features were harsh and sullen, his fingers bony and knotted.

"Evening, my lass," he said; "got the usual ready for me?" He slipped a rubber pouch from his pocket and held it out. Christina took it and proceeded to replenish it with a coarse, pungent shag.

Read "Dead to the World."

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"It's very foggy to-night, uncle," she observed. The visitor drew forth a florin, tossed it on the mahogany, and possessed himself of the pouch.

"Bah!" he growled, "what is fog to me? I know my way about this dog-hole of a town as well as if I had my sight—my sight that was stolen from me. What are fog or sun, day or night to such as I?"

Christina put the change into his withered palm. "Let bygones be bygones, uncle," she begged; "you will only excite yourself."

The blind man beat his staff upon the floor, and set his mouth to speak. But Christina prevented him.

"This is my uncle, Mr. Granger," she said; "my uncle William. Here is a gentleman, uncle, a customer, that used to live at Lafayette. We were talking—of—of Canada when you interrupted us."

"A curse on Canada!" hissed the bearded lips; "and a bigger on Lafayette. It was there I was deprived of my sight, sir," he added, "by a whip-lash as laid open both my eyeballs. I was leading a strike at the Lafayette Lumber Mills, and a party of the owners combined to protect the machinery. Firearms were unpopular, so they used cowhide whips on us."

"*You* were attacking the machinery, I presume?" said Maurice.

The blind man drew himself together as if he had been struck, and his visage contorted hideously. The next moment it had relaxed into a hypocritical grin.

"Quite so, quite so," he quavered; "all's fair in love and war, and I'm not complaining—not complaining. On the contrary, I am cheerful and resigned, aren't I, Chrissie?"

"Yes, uncle, yes," declared his niece gently, and motioned to Maurice as though to warn him against continuing the subject. He assented with a mute glance of sympathy, and deposited upon the counter a

The newcomer was a bent, grey-bearded fellow of some fifty years.

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Editor's Page.

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suggestive sovereign—he had not yet paid for his purchases.

"You might direct me to Clubmoor," he remarked; "whether I shall be able to follow your directions in this fog is another matter."

"Clubmoor!" broke in the blind man eagerly; "I live in that direction. Let me show you the road, sir. I have the map of Groudle in my head and fog and midnight do not affect it an iota. You may trust me, indeed, sir, and I shall esteem it an honour to guide a gentleman from the Dominion. Your name, my niece said, was Granger. I fancy, sir, I have known the name over yonder."

"Maurice Granger is mine," was the response, "and I am much obliged for your offer, Mr.—Mr.——"

"Fenton, sir," supplied the other; "William Fenton, Christina is my own brother's child. Then I may have the pleasure of piloting you through the fog, sir?" His wizened, deferential visage twitched oddly as he put the question.

"I should be very much relieved," answered Maurice, "if I were not interfering with your visit to Miss Fenton. Besides, she will need your escort as much and more than I!"

Christina Fenton looked at a timepiece on an Oriental cabinet at the extremity of the counter.

"It is half-past ten, and no use a night like this in wasting gas. I shall close the shop, uncle, and you can take me home as well as Mr. Granger; it is all on your way."

"That's a clever lass," cried the blind man with effusive readiness. "She's perfectly correct, Mr. Granger, perfectly. It's no trouble whatever, not in the least. Hurry up and make all snug, Chrissie, my girl."

Maurice hesitated. But there was something in the charm of Chrissie's shapely little figure and her quick movements to and fro about the shop, as she addressed herself to the task of closing, that decided him to accept the opportunity of spending a further half-hour in her company. Also, to be honest, he had not the remotest idea of the route to his own particular quarter of the town.

At this moment Christina brought out a hooked pole, and would have tripped out to have pulled down the shutter above the window. But Maurice appropriated the instrument and performed the operation himself. Their intending escort had sunk into the lounge and listened silently.

"I'm proving a great nuisance to you," Maurice managed to murmur, as he restored the pole to its niche.

"Not at all," she assured him; "uncle William often takes me part of the way home. I live at Weaste Park, close to Clubmoor, and he comes up here to a crony of his to play chess." And with this decisive explanation she jumped up to extinguish the lights.

Soon the last jet was put out, the door of the shop drawn to and secured, and the three Canadians, so singularly encountered, strode off, the blind pilot marching in the van. The temperature had fallen and the ground was slippery with frozen vapour. Once or twice Maurice had to support Miss Christina Fenton—he appreciated the privilege absurdly.

From street to street their leader stalked, his head at a peculiar bird-like angle, his beard shaking with the motions of his jaws as he muttered to himself. Maurice and Christina exchanged few sentences, a species of constraint had seized them in an embarrassing grip.

At length the blind man halted. "You go down here, Chrissie," he said; "good-night to you, my lass."

Christina Fenton glanced at her young compatriot.

"Good-night, uncle," she rejoined; "good-night, Mr. Granger. Uncle will see that you get home all right."

"I am much obliged to him and to you," returned Maurice, "though the fog has lifted, and I recognise my whereabouts perfectly." He lowered his voice. "We shall meet again, Miss Fenton," he faltered, extending his hand.

Christina laughed and touched it shyly.

"If you patronise my shop," she said, and ran off in the diminishing haze.

The blind man moved on sombrely with Maurice Granger, nor could he be induced to talk except in monosyllables.

Maurice had told him the necessary address and he steered for it unerringly. At a garden gate he paused, correct even to the number of the house—he had counted it from the street-end. His charge pressed a couple of half-crowns into his fingers, and weilding a dexterous latch-key, gained an illuminated hall.

When the click of the lock reached the blind man's ear, he poised the silver pieces, flung them, with a terrible oath, far into the misty night, and stumped on, mumbling in his beard.

Maurice, unwitting of this singular action, arranged for Mr. Jack's Leslie fire and spirituous refreshment—that gentleman not having, as yet, reached home—and went to bed. to dream of Miss Christina Fenton.

CHAPTER II.

"A Drop of Brandy, Quick!"

"Maurice, you're confoundedly moony—I haven't been able to get a word out of you all day, and now you've had your dinner I suppose you're going to sit there and glower at me for the rest of the evening. What is it? You're as fit as a fidddle, you don't owe anyone a sou, and you're not in love. Hang it, man, wake up and be sociable!"

Jack Leslie grasped a squat "bull-dog" pipe, after the manner of a revolver, and levelled it threateningly.

The recipient of his demand lit another cigarette, "Diplome Regie, Superfine," and smiled, indulgently.

"I've no trouble that I know of," he responded; "sorry I'm dull, Jack, old boy, but the fact is I was thinking of Canada; in imagination I was driving a team of bays and a box-sleigh, with bells and a red snow-net, through the moonlight. Fine things for flirting in, Jack, those sleighs. You lounge on springs, muffled in furs to your neck, and with a peaked cap pulled over your forehead, while a dear little somebody leans against you, and soft orbs look up into yours. Heigho!" and Maurice sighed sentimentally.

The listener leapt to his feet.

"Maurice Granger!" he cried, "you're in love—you've been winged, for a thousand. Confess, confess; when, and how did it happen. Why, you haven't been out of my sight for a week, except last night, and you were all right then. Besides, it was too thick to tell a pretty girl from a hag."

He pointed the pipe at his friend. "Nevertheless," he said solemnly, "you had better describe in detail your movements yesterday evening. You told me a fantastic story of your being lost in the fog, and guided here by a blind man. Were you stuffing me? was that blind man

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the little blind god of love, and did he lead you astray instead of homewards?"

"Oh, go to the dickens!" grumbled the Canadian; "can't a fellow see a sweet face, and enjoy the recollection of it at his leisure without being subjected to an absurd cross-examination when he wants to be quiet?"

"Great heavens!" moaned Jack Leslie; "he has all the worst symptoms. A sweet face, enjoyment in recollecting same, desire for solitude and meditation. Maurice, my poor chap, you've got it bad. I will prescribe for you; regard me as your doctor from this moment. Be perfectly frank with me. Firstly, her name, secondly, her complexion, thirdly, the colour of her eyes. The least evasion, and you are beyond hope."

Half-amused, half angry, Maurice Granger snatched a cushion to hurl at his tormentor. It flew athwart the room, propelled by a powerful arm, and landed full on the bosom of a lean yet dignified person in a rusty black dress, who had at that precise instant, opened the door of the apartment. She reeled and sank into a seat.

Maurice sprang to her side, followed by the cause of the catastrophe.

"My dear Mrs. Boldero," he said, "a million apologies. I was trying to dot Leslie, who has been behaving like a idiot, and the unchivalrous rascal dodged. Are you hurt?"

The astonished landlady recovered her breath and her equanimity in the same moment. Flattered by discovering that she was supported upon the breast of the repentant Jack, and that Maurice was bending filially over her, she beamed upon them.

"Not me," she gushed, "only took aback, as you may say, Mr. Granger. I came to tell you that there is an old blind man asking for you downstairs, and that hüzzy of a maid of mine being on her afternoon off—which she should have turned in an hour ago—I fetched his message myself. It was that a Miss Fenton—the young lady you met last night, he did say—was wishful to see you, if you would step round."

Mr. Jack Leslie whistled shrilly, and executed an impromptu war dance. Mrs. Boldero regarded him maternally.

"What sperrits you have, sir," she said; "but there, I must be off to my darning, for the laundry is in and Mr. Leslie's socks are riddles for holes."

"Wait till they give me Granger's salary," retorted that person unabashed; "one must economise somewhere."

When the scrawny but cheerful Mrs. Boldero had departed, Leslie proceeded to draw on his boots, and don his coat and hat.

"I'm going to accompany you, Maurice," he announced, "trust me not to spoil your fun. But I must gaze

He advanced to her, thrusting the iron in front of him.

Read "Dead to the World."

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respectfully upon the fair countenance that has robbed me of my more than brother."

Maurice protested in vain; he and his friend descended the stairs together. The Canadian was racking his brain for an explanation of this unexpected message from Miss Christina Fenton. He had been round by the little cigar-divan on his way home from the yard, but the shutter was down and the place dark. On the iron outer gate a curt intimation had saluted him. "This establishment closes at five o'clock on Wednesday." And Maurice had cursed his luck, for it was Wednesday and no other.

Could that disappointment have any connection with his summons she had sent him by her uncle. And, in any case, was it—he had to confront the question—quite, quite maidenly to favour him with that summons when, as yet, they had met on but a single occasion? So reflecting, he reached the hall, and recognised the bent, though muscular, frame of Mr. William Fenton.

"Good-evening, sir," he said, as soon as Maurice had gained the lowest step, and giving him no time to speak, added. "Pray pardon my disturbing you, sir, but Chrissie, my niece, sir, desired me to fetch you—if you would be kind enough to permit me—to her mother's house. She has—she has had an accident—she—she is dying, sir."

He covered his wrinkled cheeks with his large hands and choked huskily. "You were chatting of Canada with her yesterday," he went on, "and of being from Lafayette. She knows you for a real gentleman, sir, and I fancy she desires you to serve her in some small way."

Maurice gazed at him. "Dying!" he repeated; "dying! It seems impossible. You'll come with me, Leslie?" he said, glancing at his ally; "you may be able to help; she must have the best doctor in Groudle, Jack—she's a Canadian—from my own place. I—I hoped we—we should be—friends."

The last part of his sentence was murmured in a sorrowful aside as he opened the heavy street door. The fog had continued for some thirty-six hours, alternately thinning and deepening; now it was thick and suffocating.

Preserving the silence into which he had so suddenly lapsed, the blind man led them over a portion of the route along which, the preceding night, he had piloted his niece and youthful compatriot.

"What sort of an accident has Miss Fenton sustained?" asked Maurice gently.

"A 'bus was upset this morning in the fog on Pike Hill," explained their guide, "and Chrissie was in it. She was cut about with the glass, sir."

"But surely they took her to the hospital?" responded Maurice, amazed.

"So they did, sir," allowed the blind man; "and it was decided that her wounds were not dangerous. She was brought home in a cab and put to bed. But it seems she was hurt internally, and she's had a bad turn this afternoon."

Mr. William Fenton heaved a great sigh and stumped onward through the haze. Maurice was wrestling with the realisation that the slender figure of Christina was now maimed and agonised, her grave proud features white and bandaged, her gentle life nearing an untimely close. His vague interest in her seemed, in a flash, to have become a passion.

They had reached the dark street down which Christina had flitted the night before. Their escort walked down it unerringly, chose a bye-path, and commenced to twist this way and that among narrow thoroughfares.

As they passed a dingy block of dwellings—low and cramped—their guide tottered and lost his balance, doubling up limply. Maurice caught at him and broke his fall.

"A drop of brandy, quick," whispered the blind man, sinking to the ground; "it's my heart—I often have it. Oh, I'm ill, I'm ill!"

"Getsome spirits, Leslie," said Maurice hastily, propping the grey head upon his shoulder; "brandy, whiskey, anything. Heart-failure is a horrible affair, and the old chap's had a bad shock over his niece."

Jack Leslie hurried off, looking for licensed premises of some sort, and Maurice raised his patient to a more comfortable position.

The blind man groped in his pocket and pulled out a key. "The house is Number Eleven," he faltered, "the next one on this side; here's the key. Help me in quietly; they're all with—with Chrissie."

"Very well," said Maurice, a little staggered by this accumulation of unusual events. "I suppose I can keep an eye out of the doorway for Jack—Mr. Leslie."

He clasped the passive frame in his arms, bore it to the indicated portal, rested it on one knee to make use of the key, and carried it in.

Unexpectedly his drooping burden became vigorous, active, powerful. A kick from a dextorous foot, slammed the door, and Maurice Granger, throttled, mastered, tripped up, reeled backwards to the ground.

CHAPTER III.

The Iron and the Ring.

"Good-evening, uncle, may I come in for a moment?"

Christina Fenton asked the question, and she stood upon the threshold of a small dark passage, across which a street-lamp, glimmering through the fog, sent a few rays of uncertain light. The little tobacconist was warmly cloaked against the penetrating mist, her bright glance flashed from under a fur toque, and her curved lips and dainty nostrils were covered by a fleecy wrap.

The blind man had answered her summons, belatedly, and now hesitated in the entrance of his dwelling. Christina, however, did not wait for a formal assent to her query, but tripped into the lobby and stepped over a worn woollen mat into a bare kitchen.

In this apartment there was a chair or two, a table, and a dresser, by way of furniture, but neither, carpet, picture, or other decoration. No fire shone in the high grate, though the choking ash betrayed that it was frequently used. A single source of radiance illuminated the chamber—an iron gas-ring, connected with the hanging chandelier by a length of rubber piping. Upon it was heating a brazing-iron, such as plumbers employ to smooth their leaden joints; its red glow threw a lurid tint into the air.

"Gracious!" cried Christina, "what are you doing?" Her uncle had followed her from the door, which, however, he left open suggestively.

"I—I was just about to stop a trifling leak, my dear," said the blind man; "wait till I get you a light—you're not as handy as I am in the dark."

He struck a match, put it to the wick of a lamp, and adjusted the chimney. "You wanted to see me with reference to some matter?" he inquired nervously,

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looking from side to side of the apartment with a curious, twitching impatience.

"Y—yes," said his niece; "that gentleman you showed home last night, he—he left a cigarette-case at the shop. I thought if you remembered the—the address, I could write to him."

William Fenton rubbed his large palms together.

"Oh, I am sorry," he said; "the fog lifted, you know, my dear, and we parted before he reached home. He—he did tell me he had only a short distance further to go, but I didn't gather the actual address. How unfortunate!"

"How unfortunate!" echoed Christina, dispiritedly, sitting down on one of the rough deal chairs; "never mind, perhaps he will think where he lost it and come again."

"Let us hope so, Chrissie," answered the blind man, fidgeting; "but hadn't you better get back, dear? This is no weather for you to be out."

"I suppose I ought to," said Christina, and she rose to act on the implied advice. As she crossed the floor there was a sudden crack, the noise of rending wood and separating hinges, and she started aside to escape the falling frame and panels of a door that closed a cupboard by the fireplace. From its dusky depths rolled a masculine figure, gagged and bound. Christina shrieked. It was Maurice Granger, and he lay at her very feet.

Her uncle heard the clamour of the burst door and interpreted the significance of Christina's shriek. Flinging himself towards the brazing-iron, he caught it up and flourished it.

"Stand out of my road, girl!" he bade her; "I've trapped him with a clever tale about you, and I'm going to have my revenge. His father was the fiend as lashed my eyes out. I knew him by his voice yesterday, and the fool gave me his other name to make sure. Stand clear and let me blind the son as old Maurice Granger blinded me. I'd have done it before this if you hadn't interrupted me and made me have to hide him in that rotten locker."

Christina Fenton dropped on her knees and caught the pinioned form in her arms. "You shan't!" she cried, horror-stricken; "I won't let you. Uncle, are you mad?"

"Yes," hissed the blind man; "mad with a twenty years' grudge. Curse you, Chrissie, stand back, or I'll brand you."

He advanced to her, thrusting the iron in front of him. Christina clasped the head of Maurice Granger, burying his eyes in her soft bosom, and screamed out wildly in that awful woman's cry for help which he who has once heard will never forget.

The cry met with a prompt response. Christina felt the glow of the white-hot metal near her cheek and then it was whisked away, as Jack Leslie, springing three yards at a bound, leant over the crouching Christina and planted a blow on the blind man's chin that stretched him unconscious upon his own hearth.

* * * * *

When the liberated Maurice and the astounded Leslie picked up William Fenton he was laughing to himself, with odd crowing sounds of pleasure, like those of a young child. To-day he sits in an armchair in a great Southern lunatic asylum, making the same noises and laughing in the same grim way.

"*S—sh!*" he will say sometimes; "I did it—I did it! That's a secret. *S—sh!* Blind as a bat both of us; one blind man debit, one blind man credit, another account balanced in the Big Book. *S—sh!* not a word, not a word, it's a secret!"

Christina and Maurice are married. The little tobacconist resigned her position a month after her exciting experience under the blind man's roof. They have returned to Canada—to Lafayette. Jack Leslie spent a month with them a year or two after their wedding, and there was sleighing and ice-yachting and snow-shoe parties, and all the winter gaieties of the Dominion.

When Mr. John Leslie returned to England, he brought with him—on Maurice's behalf—a draft for a thousand dollars. This he paid subsequently into the savings' bank account of a smart young labourer. It was Maurice Granger's acknowledgement of the fact that, on the momentous night when Jack Leslie ran hither and thither through the streets of Groudle, seeking his vanished friend, the said young labourer had directed him, with unusual intelligence, to William Fenton's dwelling. What that information prevented we can guess.

At times, when the white snow-fogs descend on the wintry roads of the Dominion, and Maurice checks his team to draw the great sleigh-robe protectingly round his wife's shoulders, he will sigh and smile, and end by whispering:

"This is like old times, dearest. You remember we first learned to love one another in a mist!"

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He: "Your life shall be filled with sunshine." She: "Yes; but how about lamplight? Can you undertake to keep the oil-can filled?"

Sybil: "What a lovely little watch!" Millicent: "Yes, I bought it for Frances as a wedding present, and I liked it so much that I kept it for myself."

Mary: "Mebbe I'm ugly now, mum, but in my day I've broken a great many hearts." Mistress: "Well, Mary, if you handled the hearts the way you do my best china, I believe you."

He: "For some time past I have been thinking——" She: "Oh! I wondered what was the cause of that strange look upon your features. I had never seen it before."

First Passenger: "I wonder why we are making such a long stop at this station." Second (a traveller of experience): "I presume it is because no one happens to be trying to catch the train."

"I am here, gentlemen," explained the pickpocket to his fellow prisoners, "as the result of a moment of abstraction." "And I," said the incendiary, "because of an unfortunate habit of making light of things." "And I," chimed in the forger, "on account of a simple desire to make a name for myself." "And I," added the burglar, "through nothing but taking advantage of an opening which offered in a large mercantile establishment in town."

In a first class carriage in Germany an Englishman was observed to be constantly putting his head out of the window. The train was going very quickly, and a sudden gust of wind blew off his hat. With a somewhat strong expression, he seized his hat-box and hurled it after his hat. Then he sat down and smiled on his fellow passengers, but of course, did not speak. The Germans roared with laughter, and one of them, indulging in an expletive, exclaimed: "You don't expect your hat-box to bring your hat back to you, do you?" "I do," said the Englishman. "No name on the hat—full name and address on the box. They'll be found together, and I shall get both. Don't you see?" The Germans were satisfied, and said they always had considered the English a great and practical nation.

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The Cost of a Portrait.

By JOHN DE MORGAN.

"Is it not wonderful?"

"I never saw anything to equal it. Don't talk to me of the old masters after that. I tell you the man's fortune is made."

"Who is he?"

"I do not know. Some American, let me see though, I have heard his name before. Not in our set you know. Poor fellow, good family, but deucedly poor."

"He won't be poor long. That portrait will make his fortune."

Three Americans stood gazing at a portrait hung on the walls of a Paris saloon. It was the portrait of a young, lovely girl, fresh with the bloom of innocence, charming, because perfectly natural. The portrait had become the talk of Paris, and soon would be of the world, for there was a fascination about it which one seldom sees in a modern portrait. In the corner of the canvas was the name of Gerald Manton, a name unknown to fame until then.

As the three men passed on some of the fairer sex took a position in front of the portrait.

"Who is she?" asked one.

"Don't you know? Why Emmeline Grandin, the multi-millionaire's daughter."

"What, Grandin the brewer?"

"Yes. Hush, she is close by. I wish he would paint my portrait I'd give—"

"Come along, you are not a brewer's daughter."

The girls turned away and made room for Emmeline Grandin, who stood blushing as she heard the compliments of her companion, a penniless English peer, who had offered her a title in exchange for herself and a goodly portion of her father's millions.

"You think the portrait a good one?" she asked.

"It is superb! It is glorious! By Jove, I should say the fellow must have been inspired. I must get him to paint me."

While the city rung with praises of the marvellous piece of work and the wealthiest in the land were ready to pay their thousands to have the same artist immortalise them on canvas, but few knew of the tragedy behind that painting.

One year before, Emmeline Grandin had met Gerald Manton in the salon of one of the city's proudest art patrons.

Manton was handsome, witty, talented, and just such a man to inspire a girl with love. She was young, wealthy, ambitious, and a coquette.

The two Americans met frequently, their friendship seemed to grow in intensity. On his side it was love, a love which was all-absorbing, a love which filled his thoughts by day and lived in his dreams by night. On her side, well, it was difficult to see beneath the surface, and only in the privacy of her own boudoir did she ever ask herself how she felt towards him.

Often he had expressed a desire to paint her portrait, but she had only laughed at him, and told him that he would not be in love with a picture of her because it would lack animation, and "really" she said, "I am not pretty when in repose."

A day came at last when her mood changed and she consented.

"You really will sit for me? You are an angel!"

"I know that, Mr. Manton. I have been told that so many times, but it is not an angel I want you to paint, but just plain, every-day Emmeline Grandin."

"When may I have the first sitting?"

"Any time, whenever you please."

"To-morrow?"

"I shall be engaged all day to-morrow, but the next day at eleven, will that suit you?"

"Excellently well. I shall count the minutes until then."

"Do not be silly!"

Punctually at the appointed hour she presented herself at the studio. She was an American girl, and, as her mother was engaged, she dispensed with a chaperon and went alone.

The portrait progressed slowly. The artist became deeper in love with her. His passion was almost too much for him. The studio lost all charm when she was away.

One day his hand shook so that he could not paint, and she asked him most sympathetically, if he were sick. That little question unnerved him. He could not restrain himself longer. He poured forth the story of his love, of the consuming passion that filled his soul.

At first she listened with blushing cheeks and downcast eyes. There was something pleasing in the knowledge that she had won his love. But even while the blushes told of her soul's rapture she remembered her ambition. She had resolved to marry a title, so that Grandin brewery might be forgotten and her children belong to an aristocratic class.

She waited until he had revealed his soul's longings to her, and then, drawing herself up in all the dignity of insulted womanhood, she grew angry at his presumption as she called it, and left the studio.

When away from his presence she relented a little, for she admired him, and that evening she wrote:

"Never speak to me again like that, what you ask can never be. I am not made for a poor man's wife, and unless I marry to please my parents, I may be cast off. I will give you three more sittings, and then—we must never meet again."

It was a cruel blow, but Manton was a man and

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reasoned it all out, giving her every consideration and coming to the conclusion that she was right.

"It was presumption," he declared to himself. "How could I have dared to hope, even? I'll never let her see that I suffer. God bless her!"

She appeared at the studio radiantly beautiful, a smile on her face and happiness in her voice.

Not one pang of remorse did she feel when she saw how his hand trembled.

Manton worked, but any dauber could do as well. The portrait was beginning to look like a caricature.

"I cannot do anything to-day," he exclaimed at last. "Please pardon me."

"I am very sorry. Shall I come to-morrow?"

"If you will so favour me."

He made several attempts, but try all he could he could not paint her portrait.

"I am afraid Mr. Manton, that—that it is going to be a failure."

"Not going to be, it is a failure, Miss Grandin."

"You commenced so well, you worked as though——" she bit her lips and wished she had not uttered those words.

"I had ambition, you were about to say. It is true. I had ambition but I have lost it, and am not a painter. I know it, I feel it."

She drew near to him, she laid her hand on his arm, he felt her fingers tremble. His blood boiled in his veins. What could she mean?

"Suppose," she paused, "suppose I should tell you that I am sorry for what I said that day. Suppose I should say," she dropped her voice to a whisper. "Gerald, won't you ask me that question again? What difference would it make?"

"Do not, for mercy's sake, do not drive me mad. Forgive me, but you tempt me beyond endurance."

"Gerald, what if I were to say, my answer would be different when the picture is finished?"

"Don't Oh, don't!"

"Must I speak more plainly? Cannot you see how I am blushing? May not you see how I am blushing? Must I say, 'Gerald, I love you?'"

"You do not mean it?"

"Try me."

His face was transformed. The beauty of a glorified spirit overspread it. He was a new man. He knew not what to do. In his ecstasy he opened his arms and she was pressed to his heart. His burning kisses seemed to scorch her, and then—he stepped back, the artist had taken the place of a lover.

A few touches of the brush and what had looked like a caricature became the very perfection of art.

"Not a word of this to anyone," she said, "let us keep our secret for a time."

"Until the portrait is finished?"

"Until then."

Day after day she sat for him, and each day love furnished inspiration. The picture grew until it was as perfect as man ever made a counterfeit of nature's perfection.

"One more day and then——"

"And then," she murmured in reply.

The portrait was finished. She stood before it looking at it and trembling.

"It is too beautiful, oh, far too beautiful!" she exclaimed.

"Nothing could equal your beauty, my darling."

"You will send it to the Salon?" she asked, and the artist's face paled. He had hoped that the eyes of the curious would never rest upon it.

"You wish it?"

"How silly! Of course I wish it. Is it not beautiful? Is it not likely to be admired? Please send it."

"And may I see your father, and—"

"When the picture is sent to the Salon."

Once more she visited the studio. She was unexpected, but a glad light came into the artist's face as he saw the one girl in all the world he had ever loved.

He took her hand but she drew it away. Something had happened.

"What is it, darling? he asked. "May I not even touch your hand?"

"No, Mr. Manton. I said when the picture was finished I would give you my answer, and it is the same as at first."

Was he dreaming? Was she jesting? If so, it was a sorry jest.

"I—I—do not—not understand, you said you loved me, you said——"

"I said many things. I saw you were spoiling my picture and I had set my heart on getting a good one. I am sorry if you misunderstood me, but I won, didn't I? I got a good picture. Good-bye, Mr. Manton."

She left the studio. The artist stood for hours, like a statue. His brain was numbed. Night came and he walked about, eat, slept mechanically. He was soulless. All that was God-like left him and he bore merely the outward resemblance of a man.

For several days he was like this, and then a strange desire to know whether his picture had been hung possessed him.

He rang for a messenger boy. He bade him buy all the papers. Hastily he looked them through. His brain was on fire at the furore his picture had caused. His artist's soul was filled with joy.

He read what the critics said of it. He saw that they prophesied that he would be a greater portrait painter than Lely or Sir Joshua Reynolds, or any of the modern masters.

Almost he had forgotten his sorrow.

Art struggled with love and might have been the victor had not his eyes caught sight of a little paragraph headed, "Won by a Picture."

He read it carefully, and at last realised that the Earl of Pangbourn had seen the portrait of Miss Emmeline Grandin and had wooed and won the fair original.

The artist turned over the paper mechanically and his eye rested on a society *on dit*. "The engagement is announced of Miss Emmeline Grandin to the Right Honourable the Earl ——"

He read no more.

* * * * *

"That Manton is a lucky chap. His fortune is made. Why, I tell you he will be the most sought after artist in the world. Every girl will—here is his studio, let us congratulate him."

Two rollicking art students ran up stairs and pushed open the door.

They gave a startled cry, for on the floor, his head lying in a pool of blood they saw Gerald Manton, a pistol in one hand, and in the other, a paper in which appeared the engagement announcement of the subject of his painting.

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Editor's Page.

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New Serial

DEAD TO THE WORLD

By Henry T. Johnson.

Author of "Cruce Vincit," "The Pride of the Ring," etc., etc.

SYNOPSIS OF FIRST CHAPTERS.

Richard Seldon, a convict, escapes. In a train he meets Cyril Roylance just back from Australia, whom he murders and impersonates. He assumes the role of squire, and pays attention to Doris Dale. One day he encounters two old criminal acquaintances and agrees to meet them.

CHAPTER VII.

And Forms New Plans.

The appointment so strangely made was duly and punctually kept.

The new Squire left the Hall unattended, indeed, unnoticed; carrying in one hand a handbag; avoiding the gravelled walks and the carriage drive leading to the terrace, he took a small secluded footpath through the shrubberies, then, casting occasional furtive glances around him, made his way along a glade of green sward studded with spreading oaks of giant girth and known as The Chase. And so he reached the five-barred gate leading into the Home Coppice.

About an hour later, through the far side thicket hedge of that coppice, there clambered a man who, from his appearance, might have been a navvy, an agricultural labourer, a poacher, or a compound of the three. He wore a peaked fur cap, a threadbare fustian coat with flap pockets, light corduroy trousers tied round the ankles, heavy hobnailed boots, a pearl buttoned corduroy waistcoat, around his neck a blue birdseye belcher scarf was loosely tied, and his teeth were grimly set upon the stem of a coal-black, clay cutty pipe.

Ned Fletcher, encountering this man in the lane beyond the coppice, scrutinised him with keen suspicion. With all the converts' zeal the ex-poacher burned to distinguish himself as under-keeper and watchman; the two-fold ambition of his life was to win the approval of his new master and bring about the confusion of his old tyrant, Morgan Chandler.

"Rum looking party, yon," he mused; "wonder what's in them big pockets, rabbit wires, night lines, or perhaps a pheasant's egg or two? If I could see a trace of fur or feather I'd nail him." Then to the object of his observation: "Morning, measter!"

"Mornin', young man," was the reply, and Ned, halting, tried unsuccessfully to peer into the eyes sheltered by the peak of that fur cap.

"Been walkin' far, friend?"

"Bit of a stretch."

"From what part?"

"From where I started."

"Where bee'st thee going?"

"About my business."

"What business is that?"

"My business."

Ned's anger as well as his suspicion was aroused by the tone and substance of the stranger's replies.

"We're a bit particular who we see about these parts just now," he said, turning and walking alongside the stranger, who still plodded along the dusty lane.

"There's need to be, I hear," the latter replied. "I heard summat a month ago about an under-keeper being badly fettled in yonder coppy by a man with a mask across his face."

Ned started. The identity of the masked poacher in question had never been clearly established, but it was said that for some days afterwards Ned's hands were too badly bruised for him to go to work. It was even hinted that he had some difficulty in lifting a mug of ale, which, in his case, betokened no light injury.

"Thee'st main little to say about that business, measter," he ventured after an awkward silence, and the other answered:

"Ay; it is canny to say nowt."

"Suppose I demand to know it?"

"Thou'lt waste thy breath; I'm on the King's highway and not even thee dare stop me."

"My master's the Squire of Fallowfield, and he's soon to be a magistrate."

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"I care no more for thy master than I do for thee."

"Civil, master, there's other magistrates."

"Ay, there's many of 'em knows 'ee, Ned Fletcher; would'st 'ee like to go before 'em again?"

The new keeper was dumfounded. Strange as the man was to him he evidently knew something of his record, and Ned decided that it would hardly be wise to make an appearance before the Bench in the capacity of the scourge of evil doers until the justices had had a chance of forgetting some of his own misdeeds.

He stood still, and the stranger trudged on with something that sounded to the indignant Ned unmistakeably like a chuckle.

Round the bend of the lane, through the lush grass of the meadows, the man in the fur cap came to a rustic bridge spanning the stream that raced bubbling and babbling to the quaint, quiet, grey old mill, there in the shadows of the willows.

A side-saddled hack was tethered to the bridge rails, and along the meadow margin of the brook its rider sauntered, idly flicking the grasses and the rushes with her riding crop, her habit skirt caught up across the other arm.

And the man who had aroused the new under-keeper's suspicions ducked down with a sudden oath and watched

For the horsewoman was Doris Dale, and the lad sauntering by her side was Jack Branscombe.

By and bye they turned towards the shadow of the bridge, approaching so near that the man playing the spy there could hear their voices.

"And now, Jack dear, I must get off home to lunch."

"Wicked, heartless girl, to leave me—for lunch."

"Not for my lunch, Jack, but for dad's."

"And you'll come to me again?"

"I will—I will."

"And the stern father shan't part us?"

"No more than Lord Ullin parted his daughter and her Hieland lover."

"Dearest!" Then for awhile no other word was spoken except what the willows might have been whispering and the rippling laughter of the stream among the rushes, and mingled with these sounds that other one which first was heard in Eden's Garden when the old, old story first was told.

And the man peering through the rails of the rustic bridge, hearing that sound, ground yet another oath between his teeth.

"Dearest Doris," Jack Branscombe murmured, "you will love me always."

"Always."

"And not even the squire of boundless acres shall come between us; no one in the world shall take you from me?"

"No one in the world shall take me from you."

"Doris, I have brought a little keepsake for you, this marquise ring, dear."

Their lips met; each forgot father, rank, rivals, all the world.

Read "Dead to the World."

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"Opals and pink pearls, set in diamonds! Oh! how exquisite! Jack, dear, this shall be the dearest gem of all my jewels. And you must keep this, Jack, you must wear this locket on your watch-chain. It was my mother's!"

An exclamation of delight came to the young lover's lips, straight from his heart, as she placed in his palm the pretty trinket she had detached from her châtelaine.

"Your miniature!"

"Yes, Jack dear, I had it painted on ivory especially for you."

"I will wear it all my life."

The spy there, behind the bridge rails, watched the young lover, with fingers that trembled with joy, attach the trinket to his watch-chain, and then and there in his black heart devised a plan to seal Jack Branscombe's doom by means of that love token.

And now Doris Dale, with all the grace and lightness of a fawn, sprang up the bank towards the bridge. Her lover followed, untethered her horse's bridle, and, catching her dainty foot in his hand, swung her into the saddle, their eyes drowning in each others and all their souls in those fond eyes absorbed. What wonder they took no heed of the fur-capped man who trudged along that dusty road, nor of the baleful glance of that wayfarer's deep-set eyes?

Messrs. Branner and Plumb for the third time vowed that the man for whom they looked in vain should repent his contumacy, and that they would put him away, even if the so doing involved their being put away themselves.

"Steady, Cully!" said the former suddenly. "Jest pipe that cove 'anging about 'ere, what's the odds! He might be sent to watch us."

"We'll make it 'ot for 'im if 'e 'is," declared Mr. Plumb. "'Ere, I say, matey, you seems pretty busy taking stock."

"I takes all I can," was the reply.

"S'pose you takes your 'ook."

"S'posin' I don't?"

"Down 'im, Barney."

"I will, s'welp me! 'Ere, steady, what yer up to?" For he was looking straight into the muzzle of a tiny revolver, not too small, however, to bid him pause.

"Put that thing down, guv'nor," said Mr. Barney Plumb, "it might go orf."

"It most certainly would go off," said the man who held it, "if you tried to use that knuckle duster or your pal his life preserver, just as it would have gone off if I'd happened to have had it handy last night."

Then they recognised the voice.

"Lummy, Tiger!" said Mr. Plumb, "I allus said what a play-actor you'd 'ave made if you hadn't happened to have been one of us."

"Let's get to business," said the new Squire of Fallowfield, and then and there the precious three applied themselves to the planning of the only business they knew, the business they were prepared to carry out at the risk of liberty, even life, certainly at the risk of the lives of others.

CHAPTER VIII.

"You must Pinch that Trinket from his Cable, Barney; Let the Ticker Slide!"

It was just then that North-east Brankshire was seized with something closely approaching a panic. Week after week the countryside was startled by some fresh instance of desperate and successful burglary, carried out with an audacity and cleverness bewildering, not only the police of the county, but the experts specially sent down from Scotland Yard. Some of the most important houses in the countryside had been broken into and rifled of plate and jewels of enormous value; the county bank itself had been entered and a considerable amount of bullion had been stolen. The burglaries were generally agreed to be the work of one gang, though probably a large and powerful one.

Questioned as to his opinion on the matter by the owner of Fallowfield Hall, who took a remarkable interest in the matter and who was by his own urgent request furnished with the latest information and views of the authorities on the subject, Detective-Inspector Rossiter of Scotland Yard expressed himself as follows:

"If I weren't very well aware that a certain chap named Richard Seldon, but better known to us and to his own fraternity as Tiger Dick, was found drowned in the river Dass, into which he'd evidently plunged off the railway viaduct after escaping from Brimington Convict Prison, I should say that four out of five of these jobs were distinctly his work. The same thoroughness of workmanship, the same daring, the same absence of clue. Just consider those bank shutters. No ordinary centre bits bored them; this gang, whoever they are, are equipped with as good a set of jimmies, fret-saws, wedges, and tools in general as we've got in our Black Museum, Charlie Peace's not excepted. It's the work of artists, sir. Like this wine, sir? I should think I do; as you say, men of my experience are pretty good judges of a vintage. Your very good health!"

Ned Fletcher, for his part, roundly asserted to the Squire his conviction that the strange man he met in the lane skirting the far side of the coppice was one of the marauders, and Ned had become encouraged to speak his mind to the new Squire pretty freely, greatly to the irritation of Mr. Morgan Chandler, who had, indeed, on more than one occasion, been promptly and sharply checked in attempts to browbeat and bully the man he had purposed evicting, but whom his master had not only re-instated in his cottage, but employed, on which account Morgan Chandler owed them both a grudge.

"If you suspected the man why didn't you arrest him, Fletcher?" asked the Squire with the faintest suspicion of a smile.

Fletcher scratched his bullet head. "Egad, Squire, I'd a mind to, but bare suspicion's a plaguey uncertain thing to go on, and that chap seemed to know it, he kind o' dared me to take him before the justices, as if he were a bit of a lawyer, besides knowin' as they know a bit about me, but if I see 'im again I'd collar him and chance it."

"Quite right, Fletcher," said the Squire, "stick to that. Next time you meet that man face to face take him by the throat, twist your hands in his neck till he can neither speak nor see, give him a backheel and bring him to his knees. Now come along, you men there, isn't that dogcart ready?"

"He be a rum 'un, the Squire," mused Fletcher, watching him. "Lord! when he were talkin' to me just now like that there was a look about 'im as if he could do what 'e was tellin' me to, easy as he was sayin' it; and, dang me, I'll do it too, if my chance comes, for 'e's bin a main good measter to me. 'E give me a chance to swim when that white-livered scallywag would have sunk me," and he turned a bitter look on Morgan Chandler who, crossing the stable yard, was wondering:

1. What had happened to the sight of Cyril Roylance's left eye that he should take to a monocle.

2. What had induced him to cultivate a moustache since it so thoroughly altered his appearance.

3. Whether he had discovered anything peculiar in Morgan Chandler's system of keeping the estate accounts.

It was a capital day for driving, the roads were in excellent order, and in less than half an hour the Hall dogcart, at a spanking trot, had covered the distance between Fallowfield Hall and Dalehurst Grange.

Doris was in her garden; a rose amongst her roses, so she seemed to the Squire of Fallowfield, but he felt a stab as he noted the little frown that momentarily

Can you play "Hunt the Fiver"? See Editor's Page.

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pursed the rosebud mouth and shaded the dove-grey eyes as he approached her. Rogue and ruffian as he was, he had nevertheless learned to love this girl who was all goodness, innocence, truth, not with the higher love which can even forego the loved one for that loved one's sake; that was not his way, ever since he could remember, to desire a thing was to determine to possess it, by fair means or foul.

"Doris dear," said her father, "Cyril has driven over for the flower show, can't you make him stay to dinner as well as luncheon?"

Harcourt Dale's semi-paternal tone was part of his plan. Doris could be neither discourteous nor unkind even to those she could not like, and she gracefully seconded her father's invitation. It was further a part of her father's plan that their visitor should drive them over to the flower show in his dogcart, Dale chuckling that he did not mind taking a back seat, it was one of the penalties of being an old fogey. He observed with keen satisfaction the ardent glance his new neighbour and the son of his old neighbour fixed upon Doris. That was as it should be, their guest was young, distinctly good-looking, smart in every sense of the term, just the fellow to make a girl forget a foolish tendresse for an ineligible suitor, and he ascribed to this growing infatuation his visitor's reticence at the luncheon table. It did not occur to him how much that reticence increased in the presence of Barker, his garrulous old retainer with his eternal reminiscences of the Squire of Fallowfield's boyhood—reminiscences which at times seemed rather to bore the hero of them.

Luncheon over, the dogcart was brought round, and Doris took her seat by their visitor's side. He was a perfect whip, his turn-out as smart a "lot" as was to be seen on the road, and many were the significant nods, winks, and prophecies of the country folk they met or passed, particularly as regarded the feminine contingent.

Squire Roylance was losing no time. What a capital pair they made! Their wedding would be the county event of the year. Poor Jack Branscombe was out of the running now. And so on.

And Jack Branscombe himself, ambling towards Hazelwick on his cob, looked up as the dogcart spun past him, raising a cloud of dust, and caught one glimpse of the sweet face he loved best in all the world. And it was so radiant and happy that his heart winced with a jealous pang. Who was he, he asked himself bitterly, a mere yeoman farmer, to aspire to a lady of county family, and with a landed squire in the field, too, against him?

Jack Branscombe was in love and he was three and twenty, and youth and love are rare fertilisers of the rank and baneful weed of jealousy that had sprung in his heart in swift growth. Its tendrils were twining themselves around his very soul, strangling that which they clung to, and for all the golden sunshine of that summer day, for awhile it seemed to Jack Branscombe, even as he moved along the aisles of flaring, joyous bloom, that the poets were wrong and only the cynics were right. All was not gold that glittered, but the glitter was the true magnet for a woman's eyes. The very sight of happy faces around him jarred on him, the ripple of laughter and of airy gay chatter fell like a discord on his ear, and avoiding the throngs he sought the nearest approach to solitude, angry and ashamed with himself for feeling so out of tune with his world.

"Oh Doris, Doris, the one girl in the world for me, to think that you of all others should be dazzled by the dross."

"Jack!"

Looking up with a cry of delight, he beheld her standing face to face before him in the narrow path between the banks of summer roses, not one of them so fair or sweet as she.

A picture of English girlhood, breezy, creamy, fresh,

IS STOUTNESS PERMANENTLY CURABLE?

Mr. F. C. Russell's Opinion.

It is with no small satisfaction that we have perused a little volume entitled "Corpulency and the Cure" (18th edition, 256 pp.), by Mr. F. Cecil Russell, who for many years has devoted his entire energies to the study of obesity, its causes, and its cure, and who has originated a treatment widely known as the "Russell" treatment, of which more anon. The treatise under notice is written in a clear and lucid style, and is fairly free from those break-jaw scientific terms which only befog the lay mind. There is no aspect of the subject that Mr. Russell does not touch upon. For instance, on the question of hereditary tendency or constitutional predisposition to obesity, our author gives facts and figures which go far to destroy the popular notion that the tendency to stoutness is hereditary; for out of 13,599 cases he has examined and reported upon, he finds that in no fewer than 9,153 instances neither parent was stout. Again, out of the same number of cases, 10,409 persons declared themselves to be small eaters. Now as to the treatment which bears his name, in what does it differ from others? Simply in this, that it does not demand those semi-starvation dietary restrictions so weakening to the system, that it reduces *without injury to the constitution*, and that it aims at the radical cure of obesity, so that when persons under treatment have been reduced to their normal weight the incubus does not return. Says Mr. Russell, "Under any circumstances, my readers may rest assured that if the removal of dangerous internal fat, with a corresponding improvement in health be a *desideratum*, I may fairly claim that *failure is practically impossible*." In support of this claim, Mr. Russell gives about a thousand extracts from letters of grateful persons who testify to the enormous benefits they have derived from a course of "Russell." The compound which forms the basis of the "cure" is a pleasant-tasting, refreshing, and cooling tonic, which aids digestion and assimilates and stimulates the jaded appetite, thus affording the necessary increased nourishment to the body, while the elimination of the unwholesome accumulation of fat is steadily going forward. How very different from the irksome, disagreeable, and even dangerous sweating, purging, and famishing processes by which so many persons do lasting harm to their constitutions, and all to no purpose, for as soon as these debilitating methods are discontinued the fat incontinently returns. The "Russell" treatment, as we have seen, goes to the root of the evil, and cures permanently. The test? The weighing-machine is infallible, and will prove that the process of reduction commences within twenty-four hours of beginning the treatment, the decrease being from ½lb. to 2lbs. (more in severe cases of obesity), and this reduction continues in the same ratio daily until normality is reached, when the treatment may be discontinued. If our stout readers would like to know about Mr. Russell's marvellous success in the cure of corpulence, they may obtain a free copy of the book under notice by sending two penny stamps (for private postage) to Mr. F. Cecil Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., at which address, by-the-bye, some thousands of original testimonials are kept filed for reference, together with hundreds of newspapers containing eulogistic articles on the success of Mr. Russell's *regimen*. *The above authoritative statement is taken from a recent issue of "Cartwright's Lady's Companion."*

All Communications will be considered Private.

F. C. RUSSELL, Woburn House, Store St., Bedford Sq., London, W.C.

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"We've had to put him through it," said Brunner.

and fair, with the radiance of innocent happiness in her smile and the crystal light of truth in those twin lamps of love, her eyes. Looking upon her he felt abased because of the doubt that he had harboured, even for a moment, in his breast.

"Doris, my dearest!" he exclaimed, and in a moment, forgetting all the fathers and all the rivals in all the world, he had clasped her to his heart, and their lips had met. And then, all of a sudden, a wild resolution born of his maddening love for her surged up in his heart. She was his own before all the world by love's own sacred charter, why should he not claim her to have and to hold? In an impassioned torrent the ardent words gushed from him, words of pleading, of entreaty, almost of command. They loved each other, their love was the very keystone of their lives; why should they be subjected, he to the weary heart-sickening waiting, she to the parental suasion, the daily importunity of his rival? Yes, yes, he would win her father's forgiveness as well as her own dear self to be his wedded wife, but it would be all the same in the end. Oh! if she would only let him win her first and her father's forgiveness afterwards. And she, listening, loved him, as girls do, all the more for his daring, and when he whispered his plan love was blended with admiration of the genius that could frame that scheme, that preliminary journey to town to arrange a special licence and the place. Yes, yes, it was all so delightfully like it was in the books, and if only that dear, prim Mary Morrison, whom she, a sisterless girl, had grown to love like a sister, would only be the bridesmaid at the runaway wedding! Her father would be angry, the fathers in the books were always angry, but he would be certain to relent in time, they always relented—in the books!

And so, half afraid, and with a strange, wild bliss of doing something wrong and daring, she said:

"Very well, dear, you know best, and it'll be wisest perhaps in the end, and oh! I love you, Jack, best in the wide, wide world. Yes, dear, I'll wait your signal, and when the hour comes the girl will be there."

Their lips met; each forgot father, rank, rivals, all in the world. Once again, as for all time, from before the beginning till after the end, *amor vincit omnia*.

Yes, but strategy is as necessary to Field Marshal Love, Commander-in-Chief, as to any other general intent on conquest, and so for a while, therefore, it was laid down in their plan of campaign that they should act ostensibly independently of each other, Jack undertaking for his part, as if any such undertaking were necessary, not to flirt with any dame or damsel present, and Doris declaring that not all the landed squires in all the counties in all the realm should cause her for one moment to forget her Jack. So like a butterfly she flitted away and was lost in the floral vista, and Jack Branscombe, turning in the direction of a busier quarter of the flower show, suddenly came face to face with—Morgan Chandler.

"Good morning, Mr. Branscombe, sir," said the Fallowfield steward with unwonted politeness, and Jack returned the greeting with characteristic geniality.

"Why, it so happens, Mr. Branscombe, that you're the very gentleman I was a-thinking of, and only to think I should have the luck of happening on you just at the moment!"

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"Indeed? What is it, Mr. Chandler?" asked Jack in some surprise, for in the course of certain business dealings he had been accustomed to finding the steward of the big manor of which he was in respect of certain fields, a copyhold tenant, in a much less amenable mood.

"These are trying times, Mr. Branscombe, for people who live by their land. I daresay even you find that out, for all the best part of your farms are freehold and your copyhold on our estate stands you at a mere bagatelle."

"Oh! I mustn't grumble," said Jack Branscombe, who, after his *tête à tête* with Doris, felt his heart in tune with all the world.

"Ah, you're doing well, Mr. Branscombe, not but what you might be doing better," Chandler added with a mysterious dropping of the voice.

"What do you mean, Mr. Chandler?"

"I mean that I can put you up to a good thing in the way of business."

"How's that?"

"You're not above making a bit of brass?"

"Naturally, if I can fairly and squarely."

"Well, all's fair in love and war—and business."

Jack, wondering what was coming, made no reply, and the other went on:

"Look here, Mr. Branscombe, this is between you and me. Besides your own freehold and what you hold as copyhold tenant of Fallowfield Manor, there's some two hundred and fifty acres of our estate farmland that you've been leasing for the last three years at a rack rent, you've been leasing that from me as receiver, and now the new squire's come back and cleared off the mortgages, and there's accounts to be made up, besides that, in the way of farming, I've bought as receiver and manager from you, fodder, stock, and seeds."

"Well?" said Jack after a pause. And Chandler went on:

"Now, suppose you and I were to so manage, were to work out accounts, so as to make it look on the surface as though the land you've been farming under us had been rented at a little bit less an acre than you've been actually paying."

Jack's hand instinctively closed on the riding whip he held.

"It could easily be arranged," Chandler went on. "At the next audit you could pay a smaller amount, you and I could fix in five minutes here and now, and in case any questions might be asked, which I think very likely, I could furnish you, for the sake of precaution, with a fresh set of receipts for the last three years; do you twig? And supposing that you gave me, for the sake of convenience, another set of receipts for what I've paid you for hay, straw, seeds, and live stock. Well, you know, Mr. Branscombe, the differences in all those amounts would make a very tidy sum, and between you and me, as a matter of business, if you only acted sensible I could let you have a cheque; no, not a cheque, perhaps that wouldn't be quite wise, but a nice little roll of notes or a plump canvas bag of sovereigns for one equal half of that amount."

Now if Jack Branscombe, besides being an honest man, had been a somewhat cold-blooded and a somewhat crafty man, he might have invited Mr. Chandler to have put his proposal in such a form that he could have nailed it to the counter and that his own act should have been his own unanswerable accuser. But what he did was this. Swiftly with one hand he gripped Chandler by the collar, swung him round, and brought him to his knees, then with the other he slashed him once, twice, three times across the shoulders with his riding whip!

"You hound! you thief!" exclaimed, "to dare to propose such villainy to me! Now I understand a lot that I have heard, and now I'm certain of a lot that I've suspected. Get up and clear out, or else I swear I'll drag you by the collar into your master's presence,

"SHARPSHOOTERS."

A TALE FROM REAL LIFE.

In the typical Lincolnshire village of Little Hale, two miles from Heckington, lives Miss Mary Charlotte Porter. She is a dressmaker; and having for some time been closely connected with the Primitive Methodist body is well known locally as an enthusiastic worker in the good cause. A *Boston Independent* reporter with an eye to good "copy," called upon her recently to ask her if she would recount the real facts of an experience through which she has recently passed; and she willingly acceded to his request. Thereupon she related to him a wonderful account of how Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness had cured her of neuralgia and rheumatism with other complications from which she had suffered for years. Said she:—

"For twenty years I was troubled with rheumatism and neuralgia. I suppose I had it in my system, and being out dressmaking and sitting in draughty houses would have something to do with it. I thought I should never overcome it. Then I had influenza more than once, and that, of course, made me worse. I have been in bed and could hardly move, and even in bed I had to wrap carefully up. The pain was chiefly in my head and round my neck. Once I had a violent attack, and it drew my head quite down to my right shoulder. I thought it was a stroke. We called in a doctor, and I was very ill for about a month. I suffered also a deal with my face, and some of my teeth loosened and came out. I felt the pain in my limbs too, and at times could scarcely move. When I did move I had sharp shooting pains—sharpshooters I used to call them—which made me fairly hold my breath. At the same time I was sorely distressed by bad bilious attacks, accompanied by sick headache. With this combination of ailments you may imagine the miserable plight I was in. Doctors were unable to bring me real relief. So when I read in the paper about the good done by Chas. Forde's Bile Beans I thought I would try them, and got some. In a very short time I experienced good from them. They seemed to clear my head; and the pain which had always been present to a greater or lesser extent, disappeared completely from my back and head."

"What was the result of the continued course?" asked the reporter. "I found I could eat better," was the reply, "and I had no more biliousness. That has now quite gone. I feel brighter and stronger, and can work well and long without the old feeling of distress. The rheumatism and neuralgia have also been driven from my system. My appetite has continued to improve, and is now better than it has been for years. I am strong and healthy in every way, and my cure is due solely to Chas. Forde's Bile Beans. I have never met their equal in all my experience, and I have used many medicines. If they can do me so much good, they can do others good too, and I strongly advise sufferers to give them a trial."

Chas. Forde's Bile Beans for Biliousness are without doubt the world's specific for neuralgia, rheumatism, gout, nervous and general debility, colds, bilious attacks, sick headache, indigestion, pains in the chest, side, and back, palpitation, anæmia, liver chill, female ailments, constipation, piles, pimples, face sores, all blood impurities, and liver and kidney disorders. All chemists sell Bile Beans, or they may be had, post free, from the Bile Bean Manufacturing Co., 119 London Wall, London, E.C., for one and three half-pence or two and nine

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thrash you before his eyes, and tell him the why and wherefore."

Morgan Chandler, smarting with pain, but smarting worse with rage and hate, scrambled to his feet, read determination in the other's eyes, and slunk, like the rogue and coward that he was, out of Jack Branscombe's presence.

And having done this he stood rubbing the wheals on his shoulders, writhing in pain and impotent malice.

"I'll pay him out for this," he said, "I'll get level with him somehow and some time if I get the chance. No! I won't wait for the chance, I'll make the chance. I'll repay every blow that he's struck me a hundredfold."

The flower show was an unqualified success. All the big people of the district flocked to gaze upon the big blooms and vegetables. The hearts of some exhibitors were elated, others were broken; the marquees were gorgeous with tiers upon tiers of flowers, bright and bizarre as summer, and hats and bonnets as beautiful to behold as flower beds.

Doris Dale and her cavalier from Fallowfield Hall were the observed of all observers, and her father's delight at the impression created by their appearance and the circumstances under which they appeared knew no bounds.

"Of course," he remarked with somewhat laboured airiness, "there's nothing in it. He's a smart young fellow and Doris is a smart girl, being a Harcourt Dale she would be. I never interfere in these affairs, I let them take their course; still, young people will be young people, she might go farther and fare worse—and I'm certain he might."

Crowder Keene, the old lawyer who knew, and mostly had something to do with, the affairs of everybody in the county, took the situation at a glance, and decided mentally not to call in that mortgage on the Dalehurst Grange property just yet awhile.

Jack Branscombe listened to the murmurs that reached him frequently, thanks to good-natured friends, he had no need now to even fight against them. What was idle gossip against her own sweet promise? He held that promse, yes, and her own love token! And instinctively his hand sought the, to him, priceless locket he wore upon his chain.

A cry of consternation escaped him; it was gone!

Gone! The trinket he prized above all others, that he would have died sooner than surrender. Yes, it had been stolen, and by a practised hand, for there the link of the chain hung broken and gaping wide! Strange to say, the watch, of treble the intrinsic value of the locket, remained; but he had lost her love-gift, the gift he prized more highly than all the jewels in the world.

CHAPTER IX.

"Murder Most Foul."

That night Harcourt Dale enjoyed his dinner. Matters were going exactly as he wished them. Roylance was evidently infatuated with Doris, who, for her part, seemed very interested in him, and after all, a genial son-in-law with a convenient balance at his bankers would be a more amenable, as well as economical creditor than old Crowder Keene, who was so inconveniently insistent upon punctuality in respect of interest payments.

But really he would have to speak to Barker. As an old and faithful servant, the man had been accorded some indulgence. And till then had never presumed upon it, but on this particular evening at dinner-time Barker was an absolutely unbearable bore with his incessant incursions upon the conversation, his comments, and his reminiscences. Old retainers were very well in their way, but one hardly desired the butler to deputise as a Greek chorus.

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Harcourt Dale after a pause, "how time flies. I've been thinking to-day of your poor dad. When he and I last dined at this table you were a little chap, just out of kilts and into knickerbockers."

"And he don't seem to favour his father, do he, sir, Master Cyril?"

Harcourt Dale answered with a frown.

"Why, the very last day, sir, as you came 'ere with your pa, you tumbled down the stairs running along the corridor from the drawing-room."

"Barker; I think Mr. Roylance requires a little more wine."

"Certainly, sir. What a head he did have to be sure, poor little chap!"

"And perhaps fewer reminiscences."

Barker took the hint and subsided.

And so for another evening the Master of Fallowfield hovered around Doris Dale, while, pressed by her father, she sang to him, played to him, proving himself most of winsome of girl hostesses. Doris seemed both to her father and their guest a trifle pre-occupied, and yet she sang her tender love ballads never with more pathos and expression. Soon, far too soon for him, the time arrived for him to go. And then an untoward incident arose. The head groom reported that Mr. Roylance's horse was dead lame.

"By Jove!" said Harcourt Dale, "you'll have to leave him here to-night and the vet. shall see him to-morrow. I can lend you a bagmunless; by the bye, you let us put you up for to-night, we shall be delighted."

"You're awfully kind," said the guest, "and if it isn't putting you about, it will give me the inestimable pleasure of another hour of Miss Dale's music."

Harcourt Dale expressed himself delighted, Doris could be nothing but gracious, and so their guest remained to experience another spell of, perhaps, the most genuine happiness he had ever known.

"By Jove!" he soliloquised, looking into the drawing-room from the balcony, whither he had gone to smoke a cigarette, and regarding the white-clad, supple, comely form of Doris seated at the piano, waking a ripple of music as her lily hands wandered over the scarcely whiter keyboard.

"Is it all a dream? It's so different, what is to what was, and only such a little while ago. How, I wonder, will it end—will it end? Oh! if it could only go on for ever, why shouldn't it go on, if I play a cautious game, I've got a hand chock full of trumps this time, and, by the Lord Harry, the stakes this time are worth the winning." For his eyes were fixed on Doris Dale.

But even the extended spell of bliss came to an end at last. Doris was gone to bed and Barker, by Harcourt Dale's direction, showed the visitor to the famous guest room of Dalehurst Grange, the one wherein the first Charles reposed when on a visit to that Harcourt Dale who, later, laid down his life for the cause and the king he loved.

"You see 'ere, sir, on this mullioned window, where his Majesty scratched his name with his diamond ring."

"Yes, yes," said the other impatiently.

"Here it is, sir. Carolus Rex, that's Latin, sir."

"Ah! yes."

"Rex is king."

The visitor yawned.

"Don't you remember you had a terrier called Rex, sir?"

"Ah! I daresay!"

"Your memory ain't as good as mine, sir. I recollects a lot more about you than you does about me."

"Very likely," said the other angrily; "only, you see, gentlemen of my position have to occupy their minds with other matters of more importance than dogs—and servants."

(To be continued.)

Read "Dead to the World."

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Short Stories That . . . . . Make You Laugh.

We devote every week space in *Short Stories* to pithy, humorous anecdotes similar to those which appear in these columns. A prize of £1 1s. will be sent to the reader who submits the best storyette this week, and a *P.W.* penknife to each of those whose attempts are used. The anecdotes may be either original or selected; in the latter case, the source MUST be stated. Attempts must reach the Storyette Editor, *Short Stories* Office, Henrietta Street, Strand, London, W.C., by Monday, October 28th. Postcards only, please. The prize of £1 1s. has been awarded this week to Mr. P. J. Hardman, of 35 or 85 Gardner Road, Prestwich, near Manchester, whose contribution is denoted by a star thus.*

HE: "There was a terrible accident in town to-day. nine lives lost." She: "Really, how *very* sad; how did it happen?" He: "Well, it was this way. One of the new electric trams ran over a cat."

A pupil teacher was instructing her class upon the positive, comparative and superlative of adjectives. "Now," she asked, "how would you define 'ill'—can we say 'ill,' 'iller,' 'illest'?" "No, miss," exclaimed a pupil, "it would be 'ill,' 'worse,' 'dead!'"

A NERVOUS man whose life was made miserable by the noise of two blacksmiths, prevailed upon each of them to remove by the offer of a liberal compensation. When the money was paid down he kindly inquired what neighbourhood they intended to remove to. "Why, sir," replied one of the smiths, with a grin, "Tom moves to my shop and I move to his."

* COMING home rather late one night, old Jones discovered a country bumpkin with a lantern standing by the kitchen door. "Young man," said he, "what are you doing here?" "I've come a-courting, sur." "A-courting? What do you mean?" "Well, I'm a follower of Mary, the kitchen maid, sir." "Do you usually carry a lantern when you are on such errands?" asked the old man, sarcastically. "Yes, sur, al'ays." "Don't tell me such nonsense. You had better be off quickly—courting with a lantern, indeed! In my young days I never used such a thing." "No, sur," replied the bumpkin, sliding of; "judging by yer missus I shouldn't think yer did."

THE commercial traveller seated himself in the corner seat and carefully adjusted his portmanteau as a foot-rest. Then he handed a newspaper to a passenger opposite, and remarked: "Another of those dispatch-riders captured, you see; they don't know the A B C of their business." "I suppose you could teach them?" remarked the man opposite, with an attempt at sarcasm. "Well, I think so. You don't know Jones, I suppose—Jones, of Birmingham? Smart man, he is! Well, he went out to the Transvaal with the Yeomanry. He was given some dispatches to carry, but he didn't get caught. No, sir. He had his head shaved, and then had the message tattooed on his scalp. Then he applied hair-restorer and he felt safe. He was stopped three times and searched, but, of course, nothing was found. Finally he reached his destination, had his head shaved again, and went to show his head to the general. Oh, he was smart, I tell you. And now, gentlemen, if any of you would like to try a bottle of our 'Grow-up' hair-restorer, price 3s. 6d., I will give a written guarantee that—— Thank you, sir. Three-and-sixpence from ten shillings leaves six-and-six. Good-day; I get out here."

MRS. NEWLYWED (to cook who she has just engaged) "You see, my husband is very particular about his food." Cook (sympathetically): "They're all alike, mem, my old man was just the same. I never cooked nothing to please him in my life."

TEACHER (to new scholar): "Now, Mary, I'll give you a sum. Supposing that your father owed the butcher £7 4s., £3 17s. 1d. to the baker, £14 8s. to the coal merchant, £20 10s. to the landlord——" Mary, (confidently): "We should move."

"WHAT'S the matter, William?" said the wealthy householder. "Anything gone wrong?" "Not exactly gone wrong, sir, but I want a new understanding." "What about?" "My pay, sir." "Why, you get very good wages for a cook." "Yes, sir, they does very well for a cook, sir. But I overheard you when you were talking to your friends, sir. You called me your chef." "Well, you ought to be complimented." "Yes, sir, I'm complimented, but business is business. I can't be a chef for less than £800. Wages is all right for a cook, but a chef has to have a salary!"

WHILE a drove of bullocks were being driven through an Irish village from a fair one of the animals suddenly stopped, and, notwithstanding all the efforts of the driver, would not move on its way. A chemist who happened to see the affair went up to the bullock and injected a drug down its throat, which made the animal career down the street like greased lightning. About five minutes afterwards the drover entered the chemist's shop wiping the sweat off his head, and asked the shopman if he was the party who gave the bullock the medicine. "I am," said the chemist. "Well," said Pat, "I'll take a pennyworth of it, as I have to follow the baste."

THIS is what a young lady is reported recently to have said *apropos* of marriage: "Well, no, I don't know if I would marry for money alone; but if a man had plenty of money, allied to a sweet disposition, and a moustache that curled at both ends, and nice blue eyes, and a social position; if he had a distinguished status in a profession, or even as a merchant, and his father was rich and his mother and sisters aristocratic, and he wished to marry me, and he would promise to let me have my own way in everything, and keep me liberally supplied with money, and have a splendidly-furnished town house and a handsome country residence, was liberal about diamonds and other gems, also about the milliner, never grumbling, and I really and truly loved him, I shouldn't consider marriage a drawback."

HE was "cracking" a house in the suburbs when a slight, delicate woman came running down the stairs, and putting her hand on his arm, inquired in a terrified tone: "What's the matter? Is there a burglar in the house? Oh, protect me!" In her terror she did not think of him as the robber, and the evident comfort it gave her to find someone to protect her afforded him a new sensation. He was staggered for the moment by the situation, but hearing other inmates moving upstairs, who had evidently been aroused by her loud exclamations, he quickly said: "Certainly, ma'am, I'll protect you—have no fear. Just stand here behind the door while I look in the kitchen, where the noise seems to come from." "Oh, thank you," she replied, as he slipped out into the kitchen, picked up his shoes, and vanished, leaving the booty piled up on the floor in a tablecloth.

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"Secrets of Beauty, Health, and Long Life," is no misnomer respecting the title of this extraordinary work. The author has unfolded to the world many secrets regarding these subjects, the importance of which it is impossible to over-estimate. The work, however, has not been written for the purpose of startling the reader with remarkable theories, but as a practical handbook for all those desiring good looks, health, and long life.

The publishers have issued a popular edition, at a price within the reach of all, so that the book may find a place in every home. The work is arranged in 127 chapters, the whole of which (in the popular edition now offered to the public) is bound in one volume. The book, although published at Two Shillings, will, if ordered direct from the Publishers, be forwarded to readers of SHORT STORIES, carriage paid, at the low discount price of

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THE EDITOR'S PAGE.

That good old family game of "Hunt the Slipper" is doomed. It has been beaten out of existence by a new pastime called "Hunt the Fiver." Never heard of the game, you say? Good gracious, how behind the times you are. You'll be saying that you never heard of football next. However, in case you don't understand the latest popular game, let me explain it to you.

Take this copy of *Short Stories* in your left hand, then turn the leaves with your right till you arrive at page 530. You will there find five portraits. If yours is amongst them and you send in a claim to us in accordance with the conditions printed on the same page, you have won the game and get a £5 note for your trouble. If you don't find your portrait in this week's number, the game is to buy next week's, and so on till you do find your portrait.

Of the second batch of portraits the originals of three of them have claimed, and £5 notes have been dispatched to them. Here are their names and addresses:

Mr. H. Bramwell (No. 6),
50 Gordon Buildings,
Datchelor Place,
Church Street,
Camberwell, S.E.

Mr. F. D. Strange (No. 8),
Calne, Wilts.

Mr. William Maher (No. 9),
22 Tangier Lane,
Eton, Bucks.

Advice to Readers on Various Matters.

(Replies to Correspondents.)

In reply to "Beginner," something remotely akin to the tricycle was known as far back as 1767. The infant progenitor of the bicycle was the "dandy-horse," introduced into England in 1818 by Baron von Drais, in which the initial impulse came from the rider's own feet, with which, as he bestrode his vehicle, he propelled himself rapidly along the ground. The first pedalled bicycle was invented about 1846, and is generally credited to Gavin Dalziel, a Scotch cooper, of Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, but it was a very primitive affair, and it was not till 1867 that modern cycling, as we know it, took its rise in the "bone-shaker" of M. Michaux, a wooden machine.

On several occasions last winter (says the editor of *Home Notes*) I mentioned that I knew a quick cure for neuralgia, toothache, and earache, and in reply to many hundreds of inquiries I sent particulars. In the treacherous weather we get during an English winter we never know when one of these complaints may attack us. Whilst I am unwilling to mention the remedy by name here, I am quite willing to give all information as to where it can be obtained, etc., on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. It has been used, and is always kept handy, by the Duchess of Sutherland, the Earl of Wemyss, Lady Courtenay, Mrs. Kendal, and others. As it cures in one minute, no reader of *Short Stories* should fail to keep it in the medicine chest.

One of my lady readers writes to ask if it is really true that certain smart society women indulge in cigarettes made of tea?

Yes, unfortunately; and it is certainly one of the maddest and most dangerous "fads" ever conceived. The cigarette is formed of the unbroken leaf of green tea, slightly moistened. The taste is not so disagreeable as might be supposed, but the effect on the tyro is a sense of thickening in the head and a disposition to take hold of something or sit down. If the beginner quits them, that settles it—she will not try tea cigarettes again. If, however, the smoker sits down and tries a second cigarette, inhaling it deeply, then the thickening feeling passes, and is succeeded by one of intense exhilaration. The nerves are stimulated until the smoker feels like flying, skirt dancing, or doing something else entirely out of the common way. This stage lasts as long as the smoke continues, which is until the reaction of the stomach sets in. Words cannot describe the final effects of the tea cigarette. The agony of the opium fiend is a shadow to that of the nauseated victim of the tea cigarette. It will be hours before food can be looked at, yet, curiously enough, the first step towards a cure is a cup of tea.

In answer to "D. B.," the creation of a peer is now effected by letters patent, addressed to the new lord of Parliament, which are accompanied by a writ of summons to the House of Lords. The following is the form of procedure. The Prime Minister informs the Home Secretary of the intention of the Crown. The Home Office thereupon instructs the Crown Office in Chancery to prepare a warrant for the sign-manual. This warrant, when prepared, is submitted by the Home Secretary to the King, and having been countersigned by him, it is returned to the Crown Office for the preparation of the letters patent and the affixing thereto of the Great Seal, and the letters patent and writ are then sent to the newly-created peer. On the introduction to the House, the new peer presents his patent to the Lord Chancellor, and this and also his writ of summons are read and entered upon the journals of the House. They form the "matter of records," in which, as the Lords resolved in 1680, the title to a peerage must originate.

TO CONTRIBUTORS.

I am open to consider original stories of any length from 1,500 to 6,000 words. The character of stories required may be best ascertained by a careful reading of the contents of the paper. All MSS. are dealt with promptly, and every effort is made to return rejected stories which are accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. At the same time, I cannot hold myself responsible for MSS. accidentally lost. Communications of this kind should be addressed The Editor, *Short Stories*, Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C.

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